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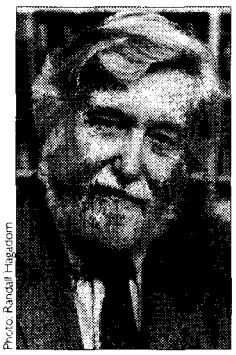

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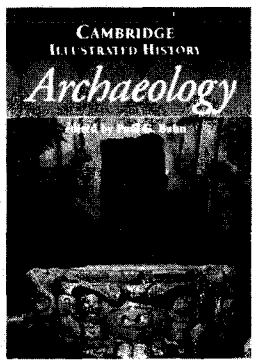

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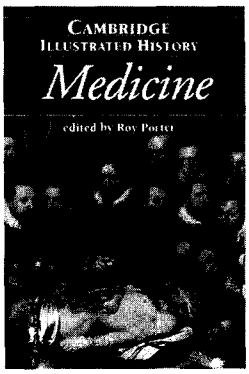

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Life and Letters

Trivial Pursuits

ARISTIDES

If I had a press agent, I would ask him to call a press conference at which I would announce my retirement as a sports fan. "Today, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth," said Lou Gehrig when he announced his retirement from baseball. My opening line would run only a little differently: "Today, I consider myself the stupidest man on the face of the earth." I would then go on to explain that for more than half a century I have watched boys and men and a lesser number of women throw, chase, and hit various balls in various parks in various cities and countries, that doing so has not made me one whit smarter about the world or my own life, and that if I had it to do all over again I would spend the time learning to play the harpsichord.

Why this heavy note of regret? Why this confession of a misspent youth and middle age? Because I feel foolish for having spent so much time on what now seems an empty enterprise: sports—and I mean just about all sports. The only game that I continue to admire, the game of golf, I have never even played and rarely watch. For the rest, I have just been part of the crowd of suckers, of whom surely more than one is born every minute. And I would like to get out now, before I wind up dying in front of a televised ball game, the last words I hear those of some multi-millionaire athlete, in a flurry of "you knows" claiming that he always tries to give 110 percent.

Dying in front of a television set during a game reminds me of what I now think of as a minor literary embarrassment. Roughly twenty years ago I published an essay titled "Obsessed with Sport" in *Harper's Magazine*. It may be the essay of mine that has been reprinted more than any other; it appears chiefly in high school and college readers, for the reason, I suppose, that the subject of sports has some intrinsic interest for young male students. I shall get to what I said in the essay presently, but I regret to have to report that at the essay's end I wrote about an older neighbor who quietly expired while listening to a ball game. The final sentence in that essay reads: "I cannot imagine a better way." Now, twenty years later, I can think of lots of better ways.

My chief point in "Obsessed with Sport" was that sports, at least sports down on the field, are free of fraudulence and fakery. Athletes, I argued, either come through or they don't; in their world, performance is all and public relations nothing. "Much has been done in recent years in the attempt to ruin sports—the ruthlessness of owners, the greed of players, the general exploitation of fans," I wrote. "But even all this cannot destroy it." I was wrong. They have destroyed it. I continue to watch an enormous amount of sports, mostly on television, but increasingly I have begun to get up from a game the way I often do from a movie, saying to myself, "Well, that was clearly a bloody waste of time."

Sports have crossed a line of a kind that a once-charming neurotic might cross into harmful psychosis. It's neither amusing nor refreshing anymore. Has it always been this bad, and have I allowed myself not to notice? "Fifty years in the business," says Zero Mostel in *The Producers* in a line I have always loved, "and I'm still wearing a cardboard belt." Fifty years of watching sports, I say to myself, and I only now discover how mean and dreary it all is.

"Serious sport," wrote Orwell, in a brief essay called "The Sporting Spirit," "has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, and disregard of all rules." Orwell felt that the rise of sports

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since the end of the nineteenth century was tied in with nationalism—"that is, with the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige." Orwell was, of course, especially good at making things seem as grim as possible. "One of the most horrible sights in the world is a fight between white and coloured boxers before a mixed audience," he wrote. He believed that sports do little more than mimic warfare, and he noted: "If you wanted to add to the vast fund of ill will existing in the world at this moment, you could hardly do it better than by a series of football matches between Jews and Arabs, Germans and Czechs, Indians and British, Russians and Poles, and Italians and Jugoslavs."

Ten, even five years ago, I would have attempted to dispute Orwell on every one of his points. Today I don't feel all that confident in challenging him on any one of them. One of the things that made sports seem worthwhile was the notion of sportsmanship, and this, it strikes me, is all but dead. Except in the game of golf, the spirit of fair play—of doing the right thing, of putting aside the question of winning or losing in order to play the game as it is meant to be played—has now disappeared.

First, fans gave up on sportsmanship. Nearly every crowd for a sports event—from boxing to tennis, from football to baseball—is now a key element in deciding the contest itself. The ugliest sports crowds are probably those for boxing who clearly want to see blood ("In hell," the sportswriter Thomas Boswell has written, "boxing would be the national pastime"). But fans seated under the baskets at professional and college basketball games are today given balloons and placards to distract visiting-team players shooting free throws. Large football crowds maintain a level of screaming that doesn't allow visiting teams to hear their quarterbacks' signals. The crowd at a sporting event is often called "the twelfth" or "tenth" or "sixth" man, and a damned unpleasant man he mostly turns out to be.

Whether the crowds are following the athletes or the athletes the crowds in this unsportsmanlike conduct remains an open question. Athletes and, even more, their coaches have come to specialize in strategies that years ago would have been considered little more than cheating. I'm thinking here of such things as running out the clock in football games, basketball coaches screaming at referees in order to gain an edge on close calls, tennis players disputing every decision that goes against them as a form of terrorizing linesmen.

When I was a boy tennis player, playing without an umpire or linesmen, we boys called our own games. One of the working principles, or so I was taught, was for me to give all close calls on my side of the court to my opponent, and for my opponent to give all close calls on his side of the court to me. A crucial moment in the decline of sportsmanship came with the rise to the top stratum of tennis of Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe. Before these players, there was nothing contradictory about being fiercely competitive and at the same time absolutely honorable. After them, the nature of competition itself changed: because one was competitive, it was understood, one didn't wish to lose any edge at all. One was permitted to complain about every close call and to behave badly, to use profanity with officials and to act like a perfect creep on the court. I regularly found myself rooting for Connors's and McEnroe's opponents, and to this day, now that they have become rather revered senior players, I find myself still rooting against them.

Not that I enjoyed sports chiefly as a branch of ethics, but I did feel that—perhaps naively, I now begin to think—it contributed to discipline of the sort that could lead to good character. I am not sure why I felt that, since, come to think of it, the list of gentlemen athletes is extremely small. The great golfer Bobby Jones is indubitably on it, a man who not only may have been the best ever to play the game but was also successful in other areas of his life: Jones finished the four-year engineering course at Georgia Tech in three years, passed the Georgia bar halfway through his second year at Emory University School of Law, wrote (very well) every word of his own books. ("I was misquoted," said Charles Barkley, of the Phoenix Suns, when someone mentioned something from his autobiography.) From all accounts, Walter Johnson also qualifies; a friend tells me that Johnson was scrupulously careful about pitching inside to opponents lest he injure them with one of his blistering fastballs. Rod Carew seems to me a gent, as did Arthur Ashe. I have the impression that the same can be said of Al Rosen,

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third baseman of the Cleveland Indians, Mike Schmidt, third baseman of the Philadelphia Phillies, and the soon-to-retire Andre Dawson. Julius Erving, the elegant Dr. J., qualifies, as does Cal Ripken, Jr., who seems a nice man in the mold of Stan Musial. Bob Gibson, the great St. Louis Cards' pitcher, may not have been a gent, but he has always seemed to me an entirely serious person. I'm not sure any football players, amateur or professional, qualify.

If sports has not produced a long roster of gentlemen, it has produced a good number of characters, oddballs, nuts. Casey Stengel, he whose syntax was only surpassed by his semantics—on his seventieth birthday he said, "Most people my age are dead at the present time"—easily makes the cut here. So does Whitey Bimstein, the fight trainer, who, when training a fighter in the Catskills, was asked what he thought about the country and answered, "It's a pretty nice place." Lawrence Peter Berra, who could float a full famous-quotations volume on his own, clearly makes it: "In baseball," Yogi once pithily said, "you don't know nothing." The light heavyweight Archie Moore, who fought nearly into old age, earns a starting position on the interesting-character team. This list could be greatly expanded.

Why are there today so few athletes who seem worth meeting for a cup of coffee? Where once there were a fair number of gents or amusing characters among athletes, today there are a great number of what can only be called sad cases: guys with drug and booze problems, women athletes with serious eating disorders—let us not even speak of paternity suits. "Drug-taking and dealing, alcoholism, drunk driving, spousal abuse, manslaughter, tax evasion—the sports page reads like a police blotter," writes Bill Brashler, a Chicago journalist. "Culminating, of course, with O. J."

Any even moderately successful athlete today is of course a multi-millionaire. Instead of causing them to hide under the bedsheets at night, trembling and thanking God for this lovely piece of good luck, the money seems only to have made athletes unpleasantly arrogant. So many contemporary athletes are clearly in business only for themselves. Oddly, some of the biggest moneymakers, not only in salaries but in endorsements, have been some of the most unpleasant human beings: the football players Brian Bosworth and Deion Sanders, the tennis players Andre Agassi and Jimmy Connors, the baseball players Barry Bonds and Jack McDowell, the basketball players Derrick Coleman and Christian Laettner.

In pointing out the unattractiveness of contemporary athletes—and let us not forget the equally odious supporting cast of team owners and agents—I am scarcely making an original point. The sportswriter Mike Lupica, in *Esquire*, gives out what he now calls the "Annual Deion Awards" (after Deion Sanders; they were formerly called the Andres after Andre Agassi), and he never seems pressed for endless examples of egregious behavior, from taking drugs to selling out fans to impressive greed.

Much of this is owing to the huge quantity of money that is thrown at them. Even on those occasions when people in sports forgo more money for what seems to be loyalty, there is something slightly dubious about it. Rick Pitino, the basketball coach at Kentucky, and Gary Barnett, the football coach at Northwestern, this past year decided not to take more lucrative jobs in order to remain with their schools, teams, and fans. Yet, one cannot help noting, these guys have not exactly chosen to join the Salvation Army. Both men, after endorsements, will probably make more than $1 million a year anyway. Northwestern coughed up $400,000 in salary for Barnett, which must be more than the head of the medical school or the president of the university makes. I remember the days, in the early 1960s, when the University of Arkansas paid its winning football coach Frank Broyles $25,000, which forced them to raise the salary of the university president to $26,000, for appearance' sake.

Today even appearance is gone. So is the guise of modesty on the part of athletes. "Once modesty was the norm," Thomas Boswell has remarked. Even if some athletes were terrible creeps in private, they felt the need to come off as honorably self-effacing in public. This is less and less true today. The bow is part of the performance, yet the spectacle of the touchdown dance, the shattered backboard, the show-off home-run trot round the bases—all this is something new and rather dreary in sports. Boswell thinks the change came about in the 1960s—Muhammad Ali and Joe Namath were central figures in the breakdown of modesty—and was reinforced by the worship

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of money that came out in the open in the 1980s. "They don't pay nobody to be humble," Deion Sanders says, and he may, regrettably, be correct about this.

But even when athletes don't act badly, they seem to me to have become strangely self-absorbed and immensely uninteresting. One of the criticisms of NBC's coverage of the 1996 Olympics was too great a concentration on the personal lives of the athletes. What I found most striking was how little in the way of personal lives they had. Almost every man and woman jack among them was a fanatic, an obsessive, a deep-dish dullard and drip who, apart from his or her ability to run or swim or jump, was of very little human interest. Such mad concentration on bodies isn't what sports ought to be about. In the lives of these athletes, things have gotten badly out of proportion. Even the heroics of the Olympic gymnast Kerri Strug, who achieved an impressive vault with a badly sprained ankle, made her seem somehow quite as sad as gallant. Whatever the payoff—cash, glory, personal satisfaction—all the training, pain, contorting of body and personality don't seem quite worth it.

Perspective on sports has pretty clearly gone more than a little askew. Red Smith, the best American sportswriter, once wrote: "I tried not to exaggerate the glory of athletes. I'd rather if I could preserve a sense of proportion, to write about them as excellent ballplayers, first-rate players." Yet Smith worried that he had nonetheless "contributed to false values—as Stanley Woodward said, 'Godding up those ballplayers. . . .' These are just little games that little boys can play, and it isn't important to the future of civilization whether the Athletics or the Browns win. If you accept it as entertainment, then that's what spectator sports are meant to be."

This past summer in Amsterdam, taking a breather in my hotel room after a long afternoon with seventeenth-century Dutch painting, fighting alongside my detested fellow pilgrims for a closer look at various Rembrandt self-portraits, I turned on a BBC television broadcast of a golf tournament in England to hear an announcer say about an English golfer that he was "usually the most wonderful of chippers," and I thought what a nice thing to be, "the most wonderful of chippers." This same announcer said of another figure from English golf who had just died, "He made many a beautiful persimmon-headed club for me. He'll be sorely missed." I have left instructions that I be shot in both kneecaps if ever I even mention buying a set of golf clubs, but I found all this talk enchanting in its right perspective, its proper proportion. In another BBC broadcast, this one of a women's doubles championship, an announcer remarked: "The audience applauds in appreciation of some lovely skills on display." Just so, just right—and just about impossible nowadays in American sports.

John Dos Passos, who was himself myopic and poor at games, once observed that the average American is not a failed artist but a failed athlete. I fear that it is true of me. Not long ago I gave a half-hour talk in Los Angeles that went unusually well. I was playing at the top of my not-all-that-powerful game. Diction, rhythm, timing, everything seemed to be in excellent order. The crowd responded to each of my small witticisms and seemed to grasp my larger points; I could feel them absolutely on my side, enjoying themselves as I was soon enough enjoying myself—the perfect ham, elegantly sliced and handsomely served. Afterward, coffee was provided. Thirty or so people must have come up to tell me how splendid they thought my talk, which I clutched, twelve pages in a manila folder, to my chest, rather as I might a tennis racquet.

It occurred to me that I wished it was a tennis racquet. And I felt about this sweet praise the brief but elevating adulation I had always hoped to win from sports when I was a boy but never quite did. I wanted to be a brilliant athlete and never was, but for less than half an hour I was a brilliant talker—and so I was able to win through intellectual talent what had been denied me by physical talent. Small though my triumph was—perhaps there were two hundred people in the audience—it felt very good, yet I needed the analogy with sports to make the pleasure fully comprehensible to myself. Something very strange about all this.

I have friends who compete in triathlons, others who play in senior men's tennis tournaments, and still others who play golf for sums of money that would cause me to change my shirt every few holes. But I am myself fresh—and I suspect permanently—out of personal sports fantasies. I picture myself on no dream teams, even in my dreams. I don't imagine

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ever playing any game in any earnestly competitive way again. Competition has almost no interest for me, and the only sport it can be said that I participate in is a constant wrestling match with the English language, from which, most days, I settle for a draw.

And yet, in ways I don't quite understand, I remain hooked on sports. I note from my journal for June 5 of this year that I went to the Cubs-Phillies game at Wrigley Field, took a not-quite-four-hour break—a break for bread between circuses—then watched the Chicago Bulls play the Seattle Supersonics in a play-off game. Both Chicago teams won. Sammy Sosa, the Cubs right fielder, hit three home runs, Michael Jordan scored twenty-eight points in a game the Bulls won by a restful seventeen points. I guess it was a fine day.

I read somewhere that a man who has watched sixteen straight quarters of professional or college football can be declared legally brain-dead, so that his living will ought to go into effect. I've been there, as we currently say, done that: I have watched four bowl games on New Year's Day, and maybe more than four, if you count a fair amount of channel surfing. My brain might have been a bit mushy at the conclusion of the day, my bottom put to the test, but I was otherwise unimpaired.

My life is measured less by the normal seasons than it is by the sports seasons. And the sports calendar, along with being fuller than the regular calendar, is more seamless as one sports season slides into another. This past year the NBA season ended in early June as the U.S. Open in golf ended, so that one could turn to baseball, only to be distracted for a few weeks by Wimbledon, then by the Olympics, then by the opening of the pro-football pre-season, the U.S. Open in tennis, and then turn back to follow baseball as it rolled into play-offs and the World Series, at which time the NBA season had begun again. A good thing I have no interest in hockey, or the year would have to be extended by another two months.

I don't know if there is a twelve-step recovery program for withdrawal from sports spectatorship, but if there is, I should be interested in joining it. The athletes, in their guise as human beings, are helping my withdrawal a good bit, and so are the games themselves. I find myself, for example, watching less and less professional football. So brutish have professional football players become—we are now well into the age of the three-hundred-pound-plus lineman—that it is rather difficult in any way to identify with them. When I was a boy of ten or eleven, I used to imagine myself a fleet-footed, utterly elusive halfback for the Chicago Bears exquisitely loping through the broken field of tacklers from the Washington Redskins and New York Giants. If I were ten or eleven today, I don't think I could quite bring off such an imaginative feat.

Today I should not be shocked if, on the sidelines, one of the Chicago players removed his helmet to reveal he was not an uppercase but a lowercase bear. Maybe this is the tack that professional football will take in the future: no more human beings, but actual bears pitted against actual rams, or actual lions against actual Bengal tigers. This would doubtless infuriate the animal-rights people and cause the National Football League to be accused by a certain kind of academic of speciesism, but it would have the compensation of making contract negotiations easier. What it would do to the free-agency rule I do not pretend to know.

If I am now watching a good deal less pro football, regaining my autumn and winter Sundays, I am also easing off on watching tennis. Along with the enjoyment in the game I had as a young player, what really captivated me about tennis was its intrinsic elegance. The white clothes, the simple geometry of the court, the handsome wooden racquets, the sweet terse chatter exchanged by players—"take two," "too good," "ad out"—all of it delighted me. Almost all of it has now changed. The Davis Cup, once a highlight of the tennis year, seems to have lost its meaning and is being played out perfunctorily each year, like a dull marriage. Although the players of today may be better than those I admired when young—Pete Sampras might have swept Pancho Gonzales; Andre Agassi, Rod Laver (though I doubt it)—the game gives nowhere near the pleasure it once did, at least not to this spectator. Watching Monica Seles play Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, two players who grunt with every stroke, I feel that I am inside a hernia testing center. Watching the finalists at Wimbledon or at the U.S. Open, I find that one of my biggest problems is figuring out whom to pull for; and often I am unable to

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make a decision before the match is concluded.

I hope soon to cut out all televised figure skating and gymnastics competitions. Tonya Harding's 1994 attack on the knee of her rival Nancy Kerrigan before the U.S. championship seemed an almost logical extension of the intense competition, with its great pool of money awaiting the ultimate winner, that is bred by the sport. But Nancy Kerrigan's own nearly blind mother's protestations about her daughter's being cheated out of an Olympic Gold medal a year or so later, when she finished second to Oksana Baiul, was not itself exactly a thing of beauty either. The pressure on the kids from every quarter—parents, coaches, sponsors—seems too great; it seems, in fact, inhumane. And the sport itself, which seems to come down to whether one can make a series of six or seven triple jumps of various kinds without misstep, in the end isn't all that interesting.

Scarcely anything remains to be said about the allied sport of gymnastics, especially women's gymnastics, which has come to seem almost a division of S & M, with the coaches in the role of sadists and the poor emaciated girls in that of masochists. "I can't bear to watch any more of that sad dwarf throwing," a friend of mine remarked apropos of this year's Olympic gymnastics competition. The sport is just too cruel, allowing no tolerance for the least imprecision. The tales of the training that these kids go through come uncomfortably close to child abuse. Apart from the sheer physical horrors of their training, girl gymnasts are put to listening to Norman Vincent Peale tapes and reading sports inspiration books about thinking tough. I don't believe this is quite what Plato had in mind when he advocated gymnastics as an essential part of the training of future philosopher kings.

Whenever I hear about the many hours of practice, the sessions in the weight rooms, the playing through pain, and the rest of the regimen of obsession and torture that contemporary athletes put themselves through, I become more and more convinced that the only kind of athlete to be is a natural athlete, someone to whom sports comes naturally and remains easy, someone gifted by the gods. I grew up around a few such athletes, and now more than ever they are my ideal.

At the age of thirteen, I worked shagging balls and occasionally demonstrating strokes for a tennis pro named Paul Bennett, Sr. At the clay courts where he taught, a boy of seventeen named Al Kuhn was far and away the best player around. So good was he, in fact, that one year he was—if memory serves—ranked second in the country for boys eighteen and under; first ranked was a kid named Barry McKay, who went on to play for the University of Michigan and had a reasonably successful professional career. But what impressed me about Al Kuhn was that he seemed never to practice. Sometimes he would show up at the courts at eight in the morning, smudges of lipstick on his face supplying the evidence that he was just returning from a date. He would proceed to play a dazzling, nearly flawless set and then return home, either to sleep off his long night out or to arrange for a date for the next night. I don't know what became of Al Kuhn, but I hope that he is a very rich man living in some pleasant clime and that his avoidance of hard work has paid off handsomely.

The other great natural athlete I grew up with was Ronny Rubinstein, a boy two years younger than I who, by the time he was twelve years old, was already being touted for his talent at our local gym. Rube became an all-city basketball player in Chicago and subsequently started at guard for Louisville, then and now one of the country's great quasi-semi-professional college basketball programs. Rube later became one of the top racquetball players in the United States, and today he wins local seniors' tennis tournaments. I suspect that he does it without training too rigorously, and, though I haven't seen him for a good while, I imagine he isn't in particularly great shape. If you can't win easily, then what's the point?

To return to my retreat from sports, I watched scarcely any college basketball last year, and then, when the time came for the NCAA tournament—"the Big Dance," as the television hype calls it—I watched it only sporadically and with disengaged interest. The Monday night of the final game, I went, with no hesitation, to a concert. The problem with college basketball, to my mind, is that it is becoming almost impossible to imagine as anything less than a training ground, a minor league, for the National Basketball Association. And this has come to seem all the more so when kids drop out after their junior or

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sophomore or now sometimes freshman year to enter the NBA draft. What's more, they are probably correct to take the money and run. It's not as if their college degrees, almost inevitably in hopelessly soft subjects, are worth much anyhow. The coaches themselves seem as far as possible from amateur. The tantrums of Indiana University's Bobby Knight no longer amuse, and the earnestness of Georgetown's John Thompson or Duke's Mike Krzyzewski no longer persuades. These coaches are all just guys out there hustling a living—and, with shoe contracts and other endorsements, a jolly lucrative one.

I was close to achieving a similar freedom from college football, but last year Northwestern University, where I teach, fielded a not only winning but very attractive team. The Wildcats beat the dreaded Notre Dame early in the season, which got my attention. After blowing a game to their weakest opponent, Miami of Ohio, they, as we clichémeisters have it, never looked back. This was a team that didn't stage little stag parties in the end zone after scoring a touchdown; its players didn't do the obscene sack dance after mauling a quarterback. Its blocking and tackling seemed clean and crisp. Whenever any of its players was interviewed, he seemed both modest and well-spoken. The Northwestern Wildcats went to the Rose Bowl, the first time a Northwestern team has done so in forty-eight years, and, though they lost, they acquitted themselves honorably against the University of Southern California, another of the standard football factories.

And yet, somehow, I do not wish them to do it again. I can wait—in my grave, surely—another forty-eight years for Northwestern to return to yet another Rose Bowl. Although the school apparently did everything very much on the up-and-up—Rick Telander, a seasoned and therefore sufficiently jaded sportswriter, has called the Northwestern coach, Gary Barnett, "incredibly moral and ethical"—there is something about sports in our age that makes even this magical season, at least to me, mildly depressing. For one thing, the coach imbued his players with heavy dosages of positive thinking. A placekicker on the team, a young man then seeking a master's degree in journalism, said that if Coach Barnett told him that he could go through a wall, he would believe it. I myself don't think he should believe it. For another, in the aftermath of the victorious season, both admission applications and alumni contributions to the school greatly increased. Owing to football, a spirit of boosterism prevails. Sales of hats, T-shirts, sweatshirts are way up. People seem to have, you should pardon the expression, Wildcat fever. I have a touch of it myself, though in me it comes with a heavy dose of dubiety. Still, I fear I am now hooked into another season. Go . . . so to speak . . . Wildcats.

I am also trapped in another season or two of watching the Chicago Bulls, at least until Michael Jordan retires. Michael Jordan is, in my lifetime, the athlete of athletes. In his understanding, execution, and dominance of the game of basketball, he comes close to being a genius. And unlike such geniuses as Edison, Einstein, and Picasso, he is beautiful to watch in action. He does a number of tricks with gravity that no one has hitherto thought possible. My cynic's radar pings a bit at the stories of Michael Jordan's personal goodness, yet Michael, as everyone now calls him, doesn't too often descend in his speech beneath the banal, which, these days for an athlete, is notable.

Much as I enjoy watching Michael Jordan do on a basketball court what, as a kid player, it never occurred to me to dream of doing, I look forward to his retirement so that I will no longer have to concern myself with the fortunes of his team. This is the insidious way sports entrap you: You follow a player, which commits you to his team. You begin to acquire scraps of utterly useless information about teammates, managers, owners, trainers, agents, lawyers. Next thing you know you—I, actually—are listening to a sports call-in show on the car radio, and the pressing question of the day is, "Would you date Dennis Rodman?"

While I believe I shall be able to walk away from professional basketball easily enough after Michael, not watching baseball games is a more complicated matter. I ceased playing baseball, or what we used to call hardball, after grade school, and I was not all that good at it to begin with, so I find it odd that this game means more to me than any other. "Professional football and basketball are spectacles," George Will has written, "baseball is a habit." Baseball denotes the arrival of spring. I like the sound of a game humming away on the car radio. It can be an excellent soporific and

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one I sometimes use to assist a Saturday afternoon nap. Radio broadcasts of night games from the West Coast are the surest cure I know for insomnia. Geometrical and simple though the game appears, it is a game about which, after all these years, I continue to learn new things. People complain about the dullness of baseball, but I side here with Red Smith, who once described it as "only dull to dull minds."

When Ken Burns's documentary on baseball was shown on our local PBS channel, I received a call from one of the station's producers asking if I would agree to come down to talk briefly about my happiest baseball memories. "Sorry," I answered, "but I haven't any." This is chiefly owing to my being, through the accidents of geography and birth, a Chicago Cubs fan. Everyone has heard all the Cubs jokes, which mostly have to do with long suffering. People theorize at great length about why the Cubs' record has been so dismal: the team hasn't appeared in a World Series in more than half a century. And now some mad physiologist has concluded that defeat in sports results, both in athletes and fans, in lower testosterone levels. A journalist in Chicago named Richard Babcock, noting this, remarked that, if it were so, Cubs fans would long ago have become extinct.

So, of course, would all Cubs, except that they are frequently traded or, when free-agency time rolls around, they sell off their services to a higher and more winning bidder. We have reached the extraordinary condition in sports in which fans are more loyal than players. Most of the latter do not live in the city from which they haul away their obscenely large salaries. Fewer and fewer have any genuine interest in baseball history and traditions. Fans seem to be of no interest to them. Owners, for their part, could perhaps care less about fans, but it is difficult to see how. There was much talk about fans being put off by the 1994 baseball strike, but I wasn't. I didn't need a strike to remind me of how selfish both players and owners have become.

Yet I cannot quite bear the notion of giving up this game. I go out to Wrigley Field six or seven times a year and enjoy the entire ritual. I leave roughly an hour before the game to get a free parking space—which tells you, with some precision, how I rate my own hourly worth. I buy a three-dollar bag of peanuts outside the park from the same good-natured man; he looks to be about my age, and we usually chat for five minutes or so. Through the courtesy of a friend, I have fine seats eight rows off the field, on the first-base side, near the visiting team's on-deck circle. I generally go to the game with someone, but I have also gone alone and been perfectly content. The greenness of the park lulls me; the people around me seem splendidly normal, neither corporation men nor women with the least pretense of belonging to the *chicoisie.* I much prefer it when the Cubs win, but even when they don't, it still feels like it has been a good outing.

I only feel this way about Wrigley Field. I no longer care about going to Wimbledon, or the Rose Bowl, or a Super Bowl, or a big heavyweight fight, or the Kentucky Derby, or a World Series game (unless, fat chance, the hapless Cubs happen to be in it). I wish vaguely only to *have gone* to such events—not actually to go. I have sat in a $325 front-row seat at a Chicago Bulls game and been a little disappointed that at this price one didn't get to keep the chair; it was amusing to have done this once, but I do not long to do it again.

First one gives up one's athletic fantasies, then one gives up one's fantasies even as a fan. I believe that this leaves, in the matter of sports, only reality. And reality here seems vulgarly to insist that, since I am no longer a child, perhaps it is time to put away childish things—and, sadder, that, past a certain age, being a fan is perilously close to being a chump.

A sports-free, like a smoke-free, environment ought to be my goal, but I fear I have too great an investment, in time and in habit, in all these games to hope to achieve it. No, I probably haven't the character to cease watching sports entirely. I am a hopeless old addict, never to be completely cured, who can only pass along this advice—with thanks to the verse scheme of Philip Larkin—to the generations not yet born:

> Games are the trivial invention of man.
> Better to pull a book or CD from the shelf.
> Leave off watching when you can,
> And never play any games yourself.

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The National History Standards

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS

IN MOST COUNTRIES THE STUDY OF HISTORY is inseparable from the spirit of the nation. The United States is the exception. Here the discipline of American history, as taught in colleges and universities, seems to exist in a state of separation that is as proud as it is fierce. Between many professors and much of the public, there are, as the divorce courts put it, "irreconcilable differences."

The bitter controversy was set off in November 1994 by the announcement that National History Standards (NHS) had been adopted—indicating how out of touch professors were with the parents of the students they taught. The National History Standards, which are more in the nature of guidelines for state education departments and not mandatory for the nation, were produced by the National Center for History at the University of California at Los Angeles. The Center had been founded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 1992 after reports circulated of low test scores that revealed students' woefully inadequate knowledge of American history. Lynne Cheney, then Director of the NEH, apparently had no idea what the National Center was up to when Gary Nash, history professor at UCLA, took over as leader and replaced Charlotte Crabtree of the Department of Education. When the NHS released its report, Cheney felt betrayed by a document that devoted so much time to multiculturalism and other politically correct subjects and so little to the study of important events and significant political leaders and scientists. A few history professors also protested, but the two leading academic organizations, the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, strongly endorsed the NHS. The U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly to condemn them.

In response to the criticisms, the NHS committee released a revised

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document in the spring of 1996. The revision makes concessions by sprinkling the document with paeans to patriotism, begrudgingly mentioning some important leaders and dropping a revealing, and most embarrassing, passage pertaining to the Cold War. The changes satisfied many former critics, who have since announced their support for the revised document. But the changes represented no serious reconsideration on the part of Director Nash. Years earlier, in *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, Nash complained of the "historical amnesia that has blotted out so much of our past," leaving us with "a white-oriented hero-worshipping history," when we should be studying how non-Europeans were "actively and intimately involved" in determining the course of America's development. That Nash still adheres to that view became clear soon after the new report was released. That evening he went on National Public Radio and defended the earlier version, acknowledging that this version was his preference and his passion and claiming that the critics were mainly non-academics such as Rush Limbaugh and Oliver North. Nash's colleague at UCLA, Professor Joyce Appleby, then president-elect of the American Historical Association, took the same position. "I was very pleased with the original one," she told the press. "Lynne Cheney is not a professional historian. You couldn't name more than five historians who would criticize them."

How many historians support or criticize the NHS would be important only if truth lies solely in numbers. The first version of the NHS deserves close scrutiny not only because it was endorsed by professional historians' associations, but because it also reflects the state of American historiography as it incorporates the viewpoints of many scholars. The categorical assumptions remain in the second version even though the "teaching exercises" in the first version have been dropped in the latter, as though the review panel that went over the first document sought to bury the evidence without addressing the Director, who himself had veto power over the composition of the panel's membership. Indeed, Director Nash's theory of American history, spelled out in *Red, White, and Black*, reads like a parable of the Fall:

> Throughout the colonial period European observers stood in awe of the central Indian traits of hospitality, generosity, bravery, and the spirit of mutual caring. Indians seemed to embody these Christian virtues almost without effort in a corner of the earth where Europeans, attempting to build a society with similar characteristics, were being pulled in the opposite direction by the natural abundance around them—toward individualism, disputatiousness, aggrandizement of wealth, and the exploitation of other humans.

The Indian as sinless Christian and the paleface as acquisitive

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predator—this *Dances with Wolves* scenario would have students believe that America could have become what it became and still remain in a state of Edenic innocence. But the first settlers blew it, and American civilization stands condemned. "Are we," asked the French historian Marc Bloch, "so sure of ourselves and of our age as to divide the company of our forefathers into the just and the damned?" Apparently so.

It is curious why the NHS's critics endorsed the new version. Except for the Cold War, the second version offers little improvement over the first and, in fact, reiterates many of its questionable assumptions. History is still presented as a therapeutic tool meant to promote the self-esteem of all students, especially those whose history has yet to be told; hence, the NHS aims more toward the promotion of cultural appreciation than toward the teaching of historical understanding. In both the older and revised versions, there is little understanding of the nature of power and, as a consequence, of the meaning of freedom based upon the specifically Anglo-American tradition of natural rights. "In the beginning," wrote John Locke, "all the world was America." Locke saw America as a kind of second chance where life could start anew, free of the oppressions that have characterized world history. The NHS has America beginning where Locke saw the world ending in stagnation.

History from Below

Gary Nash has put much time and effort into the NHS's development, and he has admirably held his own ground when taking abuse from different groups, particularly those in Oakland, California, that were demanding that his textbook be changed this way and that for ethnically political reasons. Nash is one of the rare professors seriously concerned about the education of America's children. In recent years the late Allan Bloom shared that concern, and before him so did philosopher John Dewey. Yet the orientations are strikingly different. Where Bloom thought that students should look back to classical texts of antiquity, and Dewey thought that they should look forward to encounters with experience, Nash thinks that students should look down, all the way down, to discover the realities of class.

Nash represents the now-prevalent school of thought known as the "new social history." Embracing the study of women, minorities, and the working class, social history fixates on "history from the bottom up," on the forgotten, the unfortunate, and on subaltern peoples who have been excluded for cultural as much as for class reasons. Social history, or at least that which bears its mark on the NHS, has little use

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for individuals as pathbreakers, great men as leaders, heroes as movers and shakers, civilization as in any sense preferable to undeveloped cultures, and universal values as superior to particular customs and practices. Philip Curtin, an NHS member, made this clear to the press. "In the older fashion it was like the great man theory, where you study the great man. You studied great civilizations. But you left out a lot of places that weren't great civilizations but were part of the human experience." What is not great seldom rises to the top, and thus, accordingly, true history is that which resides at the bottom and must be studied to see when and how whatever is there might break forth from below so that the last can come first. Whether or not the meek shall inherit the earth, the forgotten will now have their rightfully central place in history textbooks.

Few previous historians—with Jules Michelet one of the notable exceptions—approached history with such romantically unexamined assumptions about agency from below, assumptions that characterize Nash's scholarship, a subject to be dealt with later. Karl Marx, who saw industrial workers as transforming themselves into a conscious proletariat, recognized that such a possibility lay in the future while the past continued to weigh like a "tumor" on the brain of the living. Even Antonio Gramsci, in academic circles the most influential Marxist of the twentieth century, saw history as a cultural phenomenon that amounted to a struggle for hegemony at the higher reaches of society. So, too, the great black historian W. E. B. Du Bois. "Was there ever a nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward?" asked Du Bois. "Never; it is, ever was, and ever will be from the top downwards that culture filters."

Whether history is studied upwards, downwards, or sideways, it is questionable whether the values the NHS's authors seek to inculcate in students can be derived from the knowledge they want students to learn. Can the meaning and value of citizenship, once the province of the older political history, be based on the new social history?

Why study history? "The reasons are many," the NHS advises, "but none are more important to a democratic society than this: *knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence.* Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, what its core values are, or what decisions of the past account for present circumstances." Such learning is indispensable to the "*public citizen*" as well as to the "*private individual.*" Why? "Historical memory is the key to self-identity, to seeing one's place in the stream of time, and one's connectedness with all humankind." History also enables one to cope better in facing the present. "By studying the choices and decisions of the past, students can confront today's problems and choices with a

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deeper awareness of the alternatives before them and the likely consequences of each."

Willing Backwards

After such pronouncements, consider the following from the third paragraph of the opening page:

> What is required is mastery of what Nietzsche once termed "critical history" and what Gordon Craig has explained as the "ability, after painful inquiry and sober judgment, to determine what part of history [is] relevant to one's current problems and what [is] not," whether one is assessing a situation, forming an opinion, or taking an active position on an issue.

After informing the readers of his books that Colonial Amerindians enjoyed the Christian traits of succor and caring, it is surprising to hear NHS Director Nash cite as an authority on history the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw Christianity as a "slave morality" that spelled submission and defeat to any group practicing it. Even more awkward is that the NHS started off with Nietzsche's view of the value of studying history when his point was also the wisdom of not studying it.

Nietzsche advised truly historical students to avoid exhausting themselves in either preserving, honoring, or lamenting the past. What one needs to know about history is when to remember it and when to forget it. Nietzsche contrasted "critical" history to "monumental" and "antiquarian" history precisely to teach how the past is to be overcome. "Critical" history is for the sufferer in need of liberation. But rather than dwelling on victimhood, the student "must have the strength . . . to shatter and dissolve something to enable him to live." How will it benefit the masses of humanity to be told that their ancestors were slaves, indentured servants, desperate farmers, harassed grandmothers, abused children, exploited uncles, failed merchants, drunken sots, and other species of the flesh? "Become who you are," exhorted Nietzsche, who reminded us that "the will cannot will backwards." Since history is irrevocable and nothing can be done about it, the students' vision of the past can only "turn them towards the future," where freedom and knowledge of who we are become an act of self-creation and not an object of historical discovery.

Had the NHS used Nietzsche's advice correctly, history "from the bottom up" would go belly up. Running through the NHS is a kind of ethnic determinism at odds with Nietzsche's Emersonian passion for freedom. What one needs to know, wrote Nietzsche, is "how to grow

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out of oneself in one's own way," and to do so by opening the mind to "the most foreign." The NHS rests on the dubious assumption that education requires reducing the foreign to the familiar by way of concentrating on one's own ethnic roots—as if one grows backwards and one's inherited and hereditary nature is to be accepted with the finality of fate.

The NHS declares that we can obtain a "deeper awareness" about everything we need to know in the present by "studying the choices and decisions of the past." Nietzsche taught us that the use of history serves, like that of philosophy, to sadden, to make us aware that the past is indeed a "painful inquiry," as Gordon Craig put it, because the hurts and injuries of earlier times cannot be re-addressed and the human masses who suffered such a fate are the last people to study for their "choices and decisions," since people themselves seldom were in a position to make the decisions that determined their lives. Marx once distinguished the "kingdom of freedom" from the "kingdom of necessity" to make us aware of the harsh conditions hindering humanity in the various stages of history where people were subjected to the will of rulers and had no claim to sovereignty. Until the NHS came along, no one suggested that we can appreciate the value of freedom by studying the "choices and decisions" of a pre-modern past where the possibility of choice and initiative, of enjoying alternative visions of life, and of having the power to act upon such visions had yet to be born among those living under the yoke of necessity. To study the past on the terms that the NHS offers is not to understand it but to seek revenge upon it and falsely to will backwards when true freedom and responsibility call for facing forwards.

The "Great Convergence": Anthropology Replaces History

The urge to avenge history hits the reader squarely in the face when he is confronted by the title: "Era I. Three Worlds Meet (Beginnings to 1620)." American history no longer begins with Christopher Columbus and the age of exploration; it is now with "the first peopling of the Americas some 30,000 years ago." Then in the late fifteenth century a "great convergence takes place among European, African, and North American peoples." The curtain of American history rises not only with the arrival of Christian Europeans but with the prior presence of North American tribes and the existence of Islamic kingdoms of West Africa. Why the overreach? "Students will not grasp the collision of cultures without understanding the extensiveness and complexity of the societies of pre-Columbian America and West Africa."

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The multicultural emphasis made the new casting of American history serve the perceived present needs of a multi-ethnic society. What the NHS authors were up against is understandable. The "standards for United States history should reflect both the nation's diversity exemplified by race, ethnicity, social and economic states, gender, region, politics, and religion and the nation's commonalities. The contributions and struggles of specific groups and individuals should be included."

Fair enough. But what does a nation's present diversity have to do with the claims of a past "convergence"? Apparently none of the members who sat on the panel reviewing the first version of the NHS challenged that thesis, which actually first appeared twenty years earlier in Gary Nash's *Red, White, and Black.* Yet the latest scholarship indicates that between Spanish conquistadors and Mesoamericanos there was no "convergence," there was no coming together, because profound differences existed not only in language and communication but in concepts of time and history and attitudes toward death. The three cultures offered by NHS did not so much converge as bypass one another by means of exclusionary classifications and tragic misperceptions.

Now it could well be that students should learn the views of others whose ways of life are foreign to our own ways of looking at things. But such a curriculum may have more to do with anthropology and ethnology than history, with disciplines not necessarily concerned with how the natural and social world came to be altered and transformed. At times it seems the NHS is more interested in having students appreciate differences than in having them analyze dynamics as the prime movers of progress. Cultural understanding is a worthy exercise, but it may have no bearing on teaching students how to think historically.

R. G. Collingwood made us aware that to know is to know the causes of things, and to know the causes is to know the motives that led to the choices and decisions that brought forth change and produced the conditions that made people freer. With its emphasis on pre-modern cultures, the NHS teaches little about freedom as the study of that which is volitional, self-determining, and purposeful, that which initiates change and thus is original and unprecedented rather than continuous and repetitive. An ethnological history that concentrates on culture rather than on events scarcely suggests even a note of tragedy, since openness to the play of possibilities is seldom felt in primitive societies. The Mexican writer Octavio Paz questioned whether the pre-Columbian world could even be subjected to historical analysis based on temporal significance. "Meso-American civilization negated history more completely" than even China in preferring

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symbolic, atemporal thinking to the disruptive road to change, Paz writes. "From the Mexican high plateau to the tropical lands of Central America, for more than two thousand years, various cultures and empires succeeded one another and none of them had historical consciousness. Meso-America did not have history but myths and, above all, rites."

In the NHS introduction it is emphasized that "without historical knowledge and inquiry, we cannot achieve the informed, discriminating citizenship essential to effective participation in the democratic processes of government and the fulfillment for all our citizens of the nation's democratic ideals." One would think that the NHS would have begun with countries from which democratic ideals sprang. Instead it had—and still has in the revised version—students studying past cultures whose people reproduced their own bondage to rites and rituals.

The NHS continually proclaimed that the value of studying the past is to better understand the present. Given the NHS materials, it is difficult to see how we are to understand contemporary reality historically. "The broader context of American history," we are told, "avoids provincialism and drives home the point that the English, as latecomers to the Americas, were deeply affected by what had already occurred in the vast regions of the hemisphere."

"Affected," perhaps; "deeply," doubtful. Those of us who, many, many years ago, managed to stay awake in grammar school, will remember that the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims were grateful to the Wampanoag Indians for offering corn and teaching them techniques of growing and hunting. The NHS also asks students to consider the "expert" ways Native Americans played European powers against one another, which recalls James Fenimore Cooper's description of certain warrior tribes as "forest Machiavels." But the Indians' knowledge of nature and their bravery in battle comprise only half the story, which, treated uncritically, becomes utter romance and turns itself over to Hollywood.

As in the latest Hollywood films, the NHS depicted history in Manichaean terms, with spirit and harmony all on one side and the aggressions of the dreaded white man on the other. Thus evil inhabits only one of the three cultures in the convergence scheme, and even here it emerges as a result of alleged economic deprivation rather than moral deficiency. The Western colonists' mistreatment of Indians and enslavement of blacks is duly emphasized, but not so much as the "sin" of greed and exploitation and the temptation to render invisible the human objects of property in order to escape guilt, the terms with which Abraham Lincoln condemned slave owning, but more as a be-

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nign aspect of "land hunger," as though the New World suffered from a scarcity of elbow room.

Meanwhile, the two other cultures enjoying the convergence are, despite all the puffs about their rich "extensiveness and complexity," rather simple and certainly innocent. One searches hard for any mention of tribal massacres, enslavement of captives, starvation, ritual sacrifice, illiteracy, the absence of the plow, the wheel, and a tradition of political rights, genital mutilation, female infanticide, death by stoning for being unfaithful—in short, the brutal, degraded status of women and the complete acceptance of patriarchal domination as part of the natural order of things.

In failing to concentrate on the ugly underside of non-white history, the NHS has been depicted as a "radical" document out to subvert traditional American values in favor of third-world cultures. Actually, in several respects, the NHS is quaintly conservative in a religious sense, which, from a Nietzschean perspective, can only guarantee that "history from below" will keep people below.

First, its emphasis on the "convergence" asks students to appreciate stable cultures of lineage, unchallenged standards, filial authority, village identity, and totemic solace, all alien to America's liberal values but perhaps not radically subversive, except to early American Calvinists and their anti-authoritarianism and the individual believer burdened by real intellectual complexities. The NHS also prefers studying the peoples of the past who endured history rather than using their lives in ways today's students might identify with strength and success—a tendency that perhaps proves, as Claude Lévi-Strauss has noted, that both Christianity and anthropology express the "remorse" of the West in the face of inexorable change. And in a similar spirit of humility, the NHS encourages students to shun criticism of other cultures, since all such criticism is biased and America, as the "great convergence" thesis insists, by no means constitutes a self-contained whole. Curiously, the Christian injunction to "judge not" and the scientific principle of "value neutrality" come together on such matters, which brings up the problem of historical judgment.

The NHS has been accused of advocating "relativism" and treating all cultures as deserving equal respect. Such criticisms seem unwarranted when we realize that judging different cultures according to our own standards risks misunderstanding and distorting that which we set out to learn. Today it is called "cultural imperialism" to evaluate one culture by applying criteria pertinent to another, and literary theorists insist that we remain morally blind unless we open our eyes and gaze upon "the other." At the turn of the century, Max Weber dealt with this issue in a passage he wrote after returning from a trip to

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the United States. He compared the Indians who lived in the Salt Lake area to the Mormon migrants who arrived later. Judging which culture was "well or poorly adapted," he noted, is a matter of personal preference and cannot be based on any objective criteria considered authoritative. Some may be impressed by the Mormon's achievements in transforming the land; others may disapprove of the effects of such achievements and "prefer the desert and the romantic existence of the Indians. No science of any kind can purport to be able to dissuade these persons from their respective views."

If the NHS had taken such a position, we could appreciate the authors' effort to avoid cultural egocentricity and anachronism. But the opening page of NHS indicates how its premises defeat such purposes:

> The philosopher Etienne Gilson noted the special significance of the perspectives history affords. *History*, he remarked, *is the only laboratory we have in which to test the consequences of thought.* History opens to students the great record of human experience, revealing vast ranges of accommodations individuals and societies have made to problems confronting them, and disclosing the consequences that have followed the various choices that have been made.

To test the consequences of decisions means that students, instead of practicing tolerance and openness, must make historical judgments, even if only to declare their preference for one culture over another or the outcome of one decision over another. A genuine desire for understanding the past calls for judging intentions as well as consequences, even if such chosen intentions result in ironic, unintended results.

The Indian: Extinct Aristocrat or Incipient Capitalist?

The NHS is awash in Indian lore. Students are asked to study "Native American values and beliefs. How are symbols in origin stories such as wood, rock, rivers, corn, and squash used to explain migration, settlement, and interactions with the environment?" Every child likes to play Indian, and even risqué adults are delighted to find out that some tribes smoked pot. But the NHS is deadly serious about getting students to grasp the culture and environment of Native Americans:

> Marshal specific evidence from such Native American societies as the Hopi and Zuni cultures of the Southwest, the Algonkian and Iroquoians cultures of the Northeast Woodlands, and the earlier Moundbuilders and Mississippian cultures of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys to develop a historical

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argument on such questions as the following: *Were Native American societies such as the Hopi and the Zuni different in their agricultural practices, gender roles, and social development from the 15th-century peasant communities in Europe? To what extent did the striking differences between Native American societies reflect different phases of the agricultural revolution in the Americas? To what extent did they reflect different geographical environments and resources available to these societies?*

By posing such questions, the NHS obviously sought to have students appreciate Native Americans in their exact ecological context. But students are also led to believe that earlier white settlers misperceived Indians as in many ways inferior and uncivilized. "*Were Native American societies 'primitive,' as the first Europeans [who] encountered them believed, or had these societies developed complex patterns of social organization, trading networks, and political culture?*"

Recall that students were asked to consider "the consequences that have followed the various choices that have been made" by peoples in the past. When it comes to Native Americans, however, students are asked to engage in comparisons of "differences" and to consider "environments and resources available to these societies." The NHS promises historical judgment and gives us anthropological sentiment. Native Americans chose to adhere to pre-modern ways of life, and they are not to be judged for the consequences of their decisions.

Historians have traditionally dealt with the rise and fall of civilizations. But in the NHS, Native Americans neither rise nor fall as students are asked to concentrate not on actions and events but on the fixed conditions of differing environments. We are told that Native Americans had "complex" patterns of this and that, but where it all led goes unmentioned. What Max Weber knew and Alexis de Tocqueville analyzed, students subjected to the NHS will never learn.

"I have said before that I regarded the origins of the Americans, what I have called their point of departure, as the first and most effective of all the elements leading to their present prosperity," wrote Tocqueville. "When I consider all that has resulted from this first fact, I think I can see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on these shores. . . . One must never forget that."

Tocqueville recognized that America's liberty and prosperity derived from her Puritan heritage, and this recognition, which he would have no one forget, particularly those writing standards for the study of history, saddened him deeply when he observed the status of Indians in America. Tocqueville was in America at the time controversy erupted over the removal of the Cherokees from their land in Georgia. He commented critically on the dispossession of a tribe that had "created a written language and established a fairly stable form of government." The Creeks and Cherokees "have assuredly displayed as

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much natural genius as the European peoples in their greatest undertakings." But other observations left him distressed. "The natives of North America consider labor not only an evil, but also a disgrace, and their pride fights against civilization almost as obstinately as their laziness." It was not the "environments and resources available" to them that explained the Indian's historical position, as the NHS contends. It was their macho culture of hunting and warfare. "No Indian in his bark hut is so wretched that he does not entertain a proud conception of his personal worth; he considers the cares of industry degrading occupations; he compares the cultivator to the ox plowing a furrow and regards all our crafts as merely the labor of slaves."

In Tocqueville's observations, the Indians lacked the very Protestant work ethic that was rapidly transforming America, and their refusal to change their ways spelled their doom. How does the American historian treat this issue? James Axtell, a leading historian on the subject of Native Americans, treats it as cultural misunderstanding.

"From the descriptions of the first settlers, the Indians have been branded with an indelible reputation for laziness and lack of industry." While Indians would expend "energy and thought on various tasks," working "laboriously" in systematic toil offended them, Axtell admits. He cites one young missionary who observed of the Shawnees: "The savage state has always been unfavourable to the female. The superior strength of the man is used, not in protecting and lightening the burdens of the weaker sex, but in depressing them. But men are *ashamed* of all kinds of labour. . . . Such is the pride of these lazy lords of the wilderness." Axtell hastens to refute such descriptions by citing another report denying that squaws were treated as slaves. But he has no doubt that Indians were falsely "branded" as lazy and that the white man was simply too culturally conditioned to see the reality of a foreign species of humanity. "Bred, like all people, to an ethnocentric world view, the English saw what they expected to see in Indian life."

But Tocqueville did not expect to see what he in fact saw among the "red races" of America. "How odd it is that the ancient prejudices of Europe should reappear, not along the European populations on the coast, but in the forests of the New World." Tocqueville was surprised to discover the Old World's aristocratic disdain for labor reappearing in the woods of America. It was not that Indians were "primitive" that worried him but that they were "noble," too proud to stoop to toil and too caught up in ancestral memory as their only identity. He judged the Indians with the same verdict he judged his own aristocratic ancestors and tragically recognized that both were doomed to extinction.

Yet Tocqueville may not be the last word on this long elusive sub-

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ject. Whenever white men and Indians met, according to the historian John Demos, they invariably met on terms of "exchange," with natives coveting English tools and blankets and Pilgrims in need of canoes and slain deer. French Jesuits also noted the Indian mentality for things and objects, although more in sorrow than in satisfaction. According to one account, when "black robes" would hold up the crucifix in an attempt to bring the message of Christianity, Indians wanted to exchange it for pelts. They didn't want to be converted; they wanted to trade.

Such accounts can only be upsetting to those historians who insist on believing that "pre-modern" societies were innocent of anything other than what E. P. Thompson called "a moral economy," or a cooperative system of provision and mutual welfare. Indians, it seems, were well into, to use Marx's language, "commodity fetishism" and "exchange relations," phenomena supposedly only characteristic of modern industrial society. What Adam Smith called the "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange" seemed to be part of the Indian mentality, although one would never know it reading the NHS. Were, then, our first authentic Americans also our first capitalists? Their reluctance to engage in productive labor may have kept them apart from an emerging market that, in Fernand Braudel's words, "spells liberation, openness, access to another world." But their disposition to exchange and circulation may help explain how in recent years some Indians managed to leave the reservation and start up gambling casinos to beat the white man at his own game.

"Remember the Ladies"

If people have been left out of American history because of their non-Western ancestry, women have been left out of that same history despite having been born into a Western culture that valued literacy, political rights, and the work ethic. The challenge of doing women's history has stumped the best of minds. In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir wrote seven hundred pages of excellent analysis, only to conclude that women had neither an event-making history nor a sense of sisterhood that transcended class and nation. But years earlier, in *Woman as Force in History,* Mary R. Beard insisted that the story of women could be found if students turned to hitherto unexplored sources. Beard also perceived that the fate of women depended upon the Western idea of equality, and, although she did discuss John Locke, she seemed unaware of Locke's role as the first philosopher to challenge the idea of patriarchy. But even with the legacy of Locke, which made women the rightful heirs to political rights, historiogra-

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phy written by men relegated the other sex to oblivion. Why this systematic exclusion of our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, aunts, nieces, and mistresses?

The obvious answer is that traditional history emphasized politics, statecraft, wars and revolutions, the rise and fall of empires, the formation of government—in short, the spectacle of power and the relations of forces struggling for dominance and leaders capable of transforming events into history. Such is not the stuff of social history, and even Catherine the Great is disqualified owing to her title, while Eleanor Roosevelt was allowed to make an appearance provided that she left tea parties to head for the coal mines (she has been dropped from the revised NHS). In explaining how women have had no significant place in the "master narratives" of history, the new social historians seldom address the question of power but instead turn to rhetoric and its representations.

The current explanation of the non-presence of women in history blames the very function of re-presenting, and hence the "French turn" to post-structuralist theory to insist that past linguistic representations rendered women invisible, marginalized, repressed, out of sight, and, hence, out of mind. Mistaking the effect for the cause, historians conclude that the absence of women was a matter of rhetorical strategies rather than of power realities and that the notion of gender is a construction waiting to be deconstructed.

It is curious that American women scholars have seized upon the writings of Frenchmen and have turned to male constructions to find out about female constrictions. "The woman who is known only through a man is known wrong," warned the historian Henry Adams, the hero of Mary Beard's book. The lost status of women perplexed Adams, who wrote the little-known address, "Primitive Rights of Women." Adams questioned the commonly held view that marriage originated in purchase or capture and in the cult of patriarchy that subordinated women throughout history. His belief in sexual equality could hardly be based upon his skepticism of democracy; instead he sought to redefine feminine dignity in nature itself. "The idea that she was weak revolted all of history," he observed of the opposite sex; "it was a paleontological falsehood that even a Euocene female monkey would have laughed at." Yet history complicated matters. "Women had been supreme," he wrote in the *Education*; "in France she still seemed potent, not merely as a sentiment but as a force; why was she unknown in America?" At a dinner one evening, Adams turned to the person next to him and asked whether there was a possible explanation as to why "the American woman was a failure." Without a moment's hesitation, she shot back: "Because the American man is a failure."

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Adams knew that history is the study of power and the play of forces that seek to possess it. Such an approach to history is by no means a masculine monopoly, as indicated in the writings of Antonia Fraser, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Seyla Benhabib. But the field of women's studies and the new social history that have shaped NHS pay attention only to the distaff side of Adams's family.

Thus the NHS asked students to "analyze how women's quest for new roles and rights for their gender" can be seen in Abigail Adams's well-known letter to John Adams written in 1776:

> Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hand of husbands. *Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and* attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation.

Can one use this single letter as emblematic of "women's quest for new roles and rights"? According to Edith B. Gelles's biography, *Portia*, there is no evidence that the First Lady had such intentions in mind. "Abigail," writes the author, "disapproved of women who breached the prevailing code of female behavior." If Abigail was not advocating new roles and equal rights, and hence was no precursor of modern feminism in questioning motherhood and wifehood, what was poor John to remember when he was asked to remember the ladies?

When female scholars remember women in the past, they do so primarily as social historians, a genre in ascendancy in the 1970s when most of today's academic women entered graduate school. To concentrate heavily on the social is to privilege the ordinary over the exceptional, and hence women's historiography looks to "group consciousness," "separate spheres," "public space," "engendered selves," "social networks," and "discourse analysis" to demonstrate that women made a mark in history in areas such as the household in the colonial era and, with the beginnings of the industrial revolution, in textile factories and other workshops:

> Construct a historical narrative using selections from a variety of primary and secondary sources to analyze reasons for the strikes at Lowell in 1834 and 1836. *How did women use community bonds to mobilize protests in times of crisis? Did the Lowell example influence others?*

To teach young students that women in the past were able to be effective through collective organization and action is certainly legitimate. But one of the aims of the NHS is to address "historical-issue-analysis and decision-making" as people confront specific problems

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involving "choices," "consequences," and "core values." Unless the historian can show that alternatives other than collective action were available to young Lowell women, it is difficult to see how the responsibilities of citizenship can be taught by studying those who may have had almost no opportunity to express their own preferred values and identities. In environments where the experience of choice cannot be said to have existed and considerations of value could hardly have been an option, "community bonds" may have been formed out of necessity. Unless one is a Hegelian, necessity is scarcely the best basis to teach the nature of freedom, which only takes on meaning and value when it is freely chosen as an act of voluntary consent.

In the current teaching of American history, the increased attention given to women is understandable in light of their utter neglect in the past. But sometimes the overcompensation can be a little silly. In the recently published *A Companion to American Thought*, George Kennan is given one brief paragraph, while Florence Kelley, a nineteenth-century reformer, is given three full pages. Yet ultimately it is not the allocation of attention that is the problem with women writing about women. The problem lies in their theoretical floundering in radical categories of thought that possibly preclude women from naming the problem that has no name—the problem of freedom and its inextricable relation to power.

Throughout the NHS, students are continually asked to examine the "role" women played in a given episode in the past. This emphasis on role-playing helps us understand that we are creatures of society's expectations. In feminist theory, becoming aware that the self is socially constituted is liberating in that gender can now be seen as something constructed rather than as an essential aspect of nature. Since women as a social creation are "constituted discursively," the task of the historian, advises Joan Scott, is "to interrogate the processes of their creation." One would think, then, that women would partake of an Emersonian view of the self as "aboriginal," with the potential to be self-reliant and as autonomous as possible. But the idea of a self-made woman capable of resisting determination from without is anathema to feminist history.

Thus, whether it is because the NHS sees the individualistic self as "bourgeois" and too close to capitalism, or whether feminists prefer to see women in the past acting through groups as a source of strength, in the document, action is generally presented in a given social framework, and women appear to be compelled to engage life collectively. Such an approach to history, wherein human acts only take on meaning by external reference to society, may be incompatible with the NHS's goals of teaching "political intelligence" and the values of free-

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dom. As Francois Furet has emphasized, "political history is primarily a narrative of human freedom" involving "the thought, choice, and actions of men. . . . Politics is the quintessential realm of chance, and so of freedom." Social history, in contrast, deals with patterned structures and roles, often so determining that "society speaks and acts autonomously. According to this view, social agents simply enact their society's rules of operation and reproduction without knowing that they do so, and enjoy no other freedom than the possibility of entertaining the illusion of freedom." Or, as Denise Riley put it in *"Am I That Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History,* to treat women as a social phenomenon carries many of the same deterministic implications as treating gender as an aspect of nature. In the past not only biology but society too, Riley notes, had "horribly circumscribed" women as a fixed category. In *Three Guineas,* Virginia Woolf describes society as a "conspiracy": "You shall not learn; you shall not earn; you shall not own." Does such a female mind need to be told that she had been "constituted discursively"? Must women be reduced to a role?

There seems to be a contradiction not only between what students are to value and what they are to learn, but also between past knowledge and present needs. Since youths going to school today do so to become educated, presumably for some vocation other than manual labor, one can only wonder about the new social history that concentrates on factory work and the habitual routines of daily life. When one considers that most advances made by women in American history have been made by virtue of institutions, especially the Constitution with its equal protection of the laws and the courts with their mandated civil rights, one would think that women historians would emphasize political institutions as much as social relations. Moreover, with little attention to events, social history seems indifferent to change, progress, and some examples of successful achievement that can distinguish the dominant from the dominated. Social history, reigning unquestioned, could well be death to young women's imaginations.

Women's history only betrays its servitude to men's history by continuing a common disdain against all that is exceptional and outstanding. Consider what students could learn if the new social history allowed intellectual history a voice of its own, giving women a place in the American mind, particularly women who could do as they chose and were "great" precisely because they dared to be different.

It was a woman who first discerned the logical contradictions of Calvinism (Anne Hutchinson), who first earned a living as an author (Hannah Adams), who first brought Goethe to America (Margaret

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Fuller), who first assaulted plantation slavery by allegorizing it (Harriet Beecher Stowe), who first saw the implications of evolutionary biology for their sex (Charlotte Perkins Gilman), who first wrote a Flaubertian novel on the silk cage of domesticity (Kate Chopin), who first poeticized the "soft eclipse" of woman by the requirements of wifehood (Emily Dickinson), who first made us aware of the environment's ecological fragility (Rachel Carson), who first appreciated modern art (Gertrude Stein) and supported it (Peggy Guggenheim) and turned it into landscape realism (Georgia O'Keeffe), who first took up music to make Parisian society swing (Josephine Baker) and bring tears from the soul (Bessie Smith) and make an aria vibrate with the beauty of black spirituality (Leontyne Price), who first went back beyond modern America to understand human relations (Margaret Mead), and who first showed us that the American Revolution succeeded because it had no need to address the "social question" of human misery and class oppression (Hannah Arendt).

Remember the ladies indeed!

History Through a Bottomist

NHS Director Gary Nash has spent much of his academic career writing a history at complete odds with Arendt's thesis. In *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (1979), a study of the seaport cities of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, Nash argued that previous scholars have tried to explain the American Revolution while ignoring such social realities as "mass indebtedness, widowhood, and poverty." Nash succeeded in making us aware of pockets of social distress in American society, but his insistence that the study of history is the study of "popular collective action" began to sound like a marching street chant from the sixties, as though "We Shall Overcome" had joined with the music from *Les Misérables.* Nash did uncover some rumblings from below, but he was never quite able to connect his data to the outbreak of the Revolution—which brings to mind Trotsky's remark that if poverty explained revolution, there would be a revolution every day. Yet Nash continues to believe that the truths about the past are down there to be found at the lower depths of society and that it is history "from the bottom up" that will redeem America. Downtrodden humanity not only endures history, it is "actively and intimately involved" in making it. Gary Nash is a bottomist.

In the early part of the century Carl Becker informed us about a dual revolution taking place at the time of the Revolution, a struggle for home rule and a struggle to see who shall rule at home. Yet neither

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Becker nor Nash addresses the central issue of Arendt's thesis in *On Revolution*: that it was absence of social misery and class oppression that explains why the American Revolution succeeded in realizing liberty and institutionalizing freedom in the Constitution and why all other subsequent revolutions failed to do so. What Arendt called "the social question" is mentioned neither in the Declaration of Independence nor in the writings of Tom Paine or others who sought to see America liberated from British rule and who did not want to transform social relations from top to bottom and turn society upside down.

Nash's effort to describe the Revolution as a radically transforming event explains why students were asked in the NHS to see the event as a possible "civil war" consisting of "multiple movements" and has them dwelling on the Shaysites, Paxton Boys, Regulators, and "Whiskey Rebels." Social historians seek to highlight struggle from below and any possible challenges to authority wherever they may be found, and this search for "oppositionalist" impulses characterizes the second version of the NHS as well as the first. It is endemic in much of historiography. But while the bottomists bloom in the profession, will students be prepared to understand the nature of a revolution when asked this question?

How have the ideas that inspired the American and French Revolutions influenced the 20th-century revolutions in Mexico, Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam? How Have Americans viewed these modern revolutions?

The choice of these countries is puzzling yet revealing. As Franco Venturi has shown, in the eighteenth century, the American Revolution reverberated in Holland, Sweden, France, Spain, Turkey, Prussia, and Russia. In the twentieth century, with the exception of Mexico, all other revolutions were inspired by a Marxist-Leninism that had no use for the liberal doctrines of the American or French revolutions. Marx once praised the United States as "the highest form of popular government, till now realized," only to change his mind and declare the American Republic "the model country of the democratic imposture." Trotsky formulated the "law of combined development" to convince comrades that Russia could skip the liberal stage of history that America enjoyed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What Fidel Castro thinks of the American Revolution should perhaps not be repeated to school children.

How will students ever understand what happened in the Russian Revolution of 1917? That event, which shook the world for ten days and then captivated much of it for seventy years, had many of the ingredients Nash has tried to find in the American Revolution. But students are asked not to consider Russia's own "civil war" or how

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Lenin violated Marx's faith in social democracy with the Bolshevik seizure of power; instead, they are asked: "How did Wilson's subsequent actions in regards to Russia violate the principles set forth in his Fourteen Points?"

In a way, it is perhaps a good thing that the NHS concentrates on social history, for when it turns to political-diplomatic history the results are grotesque. Consider the following passage, one that has been dropped in the revised NHS but one that was originally endorsed by professional historical associations:

> The swordplay of the Soviet Union and the United States rightfully claims attention because it led to the Korean and Vietnam wars as well as the Berlin airlift, Cuban missile crisis, American intervention in many parts of the world, a huge investment in scientific research, and environmental damage that will take generations to rectify. The Vietnam War is especially noteworthy. It demonstrated the power of American public opinion in reversing foreign policy, it tested the democratic system to its limits, and it left scars on American society that have not yet been erased.

Nine pages later, after raising questions about American society and popular culture in the post–World War II years, the NHS posed five long questions involving the Cold War, one dealing with containment and atomic weaponry, the other four dealing with McCarthyism. Earlier in the document, emphasis is given to Hitler and the Holocaust; in the Cold War section, absolutely no mention is made of the fall of Eastern Europe, including democratic Czechoslovakia, Stalin, the purges, the Communist atrocities against the anarchists in Spain, the Ukraine famine, or the Gulag. The American people, according to the first version of the NHS, allowed themselves to succumb to "fears" of communism because of the country's tradition of "red-baiting." Yet students have no way of knowing, based on NHS materials, what communism actually meant to people living under it and why they may have had nightmares about a foreign power or a native police state whose brutal activities somehow disappear from American history textbooks. While the NHS is willing to take students to sixteenth-century Africa, it denies them a look at twentieth-century Russia. The NHS declares that "knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence" and then denies students historical knowledge about the most enduring and devastating political phenomenon of the twentieth century.

The cover-up of the Soviet side of the Cold War has been corrected in the revised NHS. Still, the document perpetuates its own faulty presuppositions about the movement of history and the nature of power. Thus the NHS undergoes a strange shift in judgment when a

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shift in genres takes place. When the emphasis changes from social history to diplomatic history, a transmogrification suddenly springs forth. While writing about domestic affairs, NHS historians see class conflict as ubiquitous and ineluctable; while writing about international affairs, conflict is regarded as avoidable and explicable only by America's undue "fears" and the persistence of "McCarthy's anti-communist legacy." In this schizoid story, students are told of the reality of class conflict at home and the possibility of peaceful consensus abroad. Ironically, people inhabiting the same country and political culture exist in a state of mutual antagonism, while rival ideological blocs can exist in rational harmony. Power, it seems, stops at a nation's boundaries when history plays itself out as "swordplay." The NHS authors claim that history is vital to a country's political education, while they do not understand the first lesson of geopolitics—the pathology of power.

No Knowledge of Power, No Understanding of Freedom

In defending Director Nash, the sociologist Todd Gitlin has argued that while the NHS looks to history as "explanation," its critics are only interested in "veneration." Both sides, it seems to me, ask for uncritical veneration and differ only concerning where it should be directed: from the top down or the bottom up. Gitlin also charges that the critics have missed two essential points in the new way of looking at American history. "First, traditionally American history was mainly the history of power, and power was white, male, and elite. (What else could it have been?) But the new standards carried a sense that history was also a struggle against power."

Can people obtain power if they do not have a *Machtpragma*? In *The Urban Crucible*, NHS Director Nash writes:

> It was not political power itself that the laboring classes yearned for, but an equitable system in which they could pursue their modest goals. . . . Yet their periodic excursions into "radical" politics, in order to either conserve the corporate community or to pry open the doors of opportunity in the new entrepreneurial age, had a cumulative effect. A sense of their own power grew as their trust in those above them diminished and as their experience expanded in making decisions, exercising leadership roles, and refuting those who were supposed to be wiser because they were wealthier. Hence factional politics intensified.

Neither Nash nor anyone who writes history "from the bottom up" can deal with power if his or her presuppositions about "class con-

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sciousness," the announced theme of *The Urban Crucible,* precludes describing workers as having a drive toward it. Nash would have us believe that his urban workers challenged the authority and deference of the merchant and gentry classes as the Revolution approached and the acts of the British parliament fell heavily on the poor. But Nash is also convinced of another theme running through the NHS: that the presence of class antagonism is itself evidence that social classes are of a different character, with each having its own system of values and those at the bottom bearing no trace of whatever may be above them; hence no envy, resentment, or acquisitiveness born of emulation; no need for respect and mutual recognition from the "wiser" and "wealthier"; no desire to prevail and dominate; and, seemingly, no interest or passion that demands to be gratified. "The urban lower order formulated distinctly different points of view from the ones held by those above," insists Nash.

Simone Weil, who studied closely and despairingly French factory workers, came to the opposite conclusion. "It is difficult to see how their world springs up from the masses, spontaneously, to be the opposite of the system that formed, or deformed, them." Tocqueville and Lincoln also saw what Nash and the NHS either deny or miss seeing. In societies undergoing change and liberalization, they pointed out, situations of subordination are temporary as wealth circulates and status is in transition; thus as the servant can move into the class of the master, and so desires to move upward, he is no more different from the master than the artisan is from the merchant and perhaps even the laborer from the capitalist.

Nash is only one of hundreds of historians who teach students that the working class has its own "distinct set of cultural values" and that its sense of "class solidarity" stands in opposition to the classes above. Once again Du Bois seems wiser than white scholars. "Why," asked Du Bois, "should we assume on the part of unlettered and suppressed masses of white workers, a clearness of thought and a sense of human brotherhood, that is sadly lacking in the most educated classes?" Rarely can such historians as Nash demonstrate his alleged "class consciousness," and, thanks to the recent research of Simon Middleton, we now know that the colonial-era worker behaved no differently than the incipient capitalist in being competitive, in lusting after contracts, and in bringing law suits against fellow workers. *The Urban Crucible,* whose thesis about class runs through the NHS like a red thread, so misleads students about the nature of power and the character of the working class that it invites an irresistible Nietzschean analysis of the genealogy of pseudo-morality. The impotence of the "lower order" becomes virtue, its satisfaction with the simple things of life becomes

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goodness, and its historical inability to rise to dominance becomes innocence. Where is the challenge to power?

The notion that intensified factional strife is itself tantamount to power, or even to the "struggle against power," is more an act of hope than a feat of history, an illusion that the powerless possess the secret of power by virtue of not wanting to possess it through pursuing wealth and that power is derivative of simple action rather than strategic organization and location. Such sentiments smack of the "participatory democracy" of the sixties—an ethos innocent of how power eludes people because it can only assert itself by excluding others in ways that make domination and participation incompatible.

Would that the NHS did show students how history can teach us about the many meanings of power and how to struggle against it. How to resist power and tame it became the theme of the *Federalist*, a brilliant document that receives almost no attention in the NHS. Hannah Arendt absorbed those essays as a profound meditation on power, citing Madison, who said that politics and knowledge of power comprise "the greatest reflection on human nature." The hapless students subjected to the NHS will know nothing about power to the extent that intellectual history becomes not a means of analyzing ideas but instead a therapeutic tool for cultural identity. Consider the following question asked in the World History Standards:

> Read excerpts from Machiavelli's *The Prince* and compare his understanding of "realpolitik" with earlier writers like Kautilay and the Qin Legalists such as Han Fei. Could Machiavelli have been influenced by these earlier philosophers?

Note that students are asked not to grasp what Machiavelli was saying but to show that he was not so original and that his ideas may have come from non-Western sources. Whether or not these exotic sounding authors knew the secret of power, some Chinese thinkers believed that holders of power could be trained to be sages endowed with moderation and benevolence. A far cry from Machiavelli, who didn't read Chinese.

Bottomists deceive themselves. For all their incantations of "class formation," social historians have yet to demonstrate how those at the bottom take shape as a political force, gain consciousness of their own interests, and win some measure of freedom as a result of obtaining the power in order to alter the conditions of life. As Marx himself noted, in countries that are experiencing liberalization and modernization, the dynamic of history is not from the bottom up but from the top down. "Liberation from the point of view of the bourgeoisie—

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competition—was the only possible way during the eighteenth-century to open up the individual to a new career for freer development." The NHS Director depicted America's becoming individualistic as a violation of Christianity when almost every other thinker saw individualism as the natural outcome of Protestantism. "Capitalism's ceaseless striving toward the general form of wealth," wrote Marx in the *Grundrisse*, "drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness (*Naturbedürftigkeit*), and thus creates the material element for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption." Marx reminded readers of the *New York Daily Tribune* of what goes unacknowledged in the NHS: that "capital is productive" and that the "bourgeois period of history" is as creative as it is necessary. In the London *Times* in 1857, Marx delighted in describing the despair of a West-Indian plantation owner who could not get his slaves to work hard.

"Wealth confronts direct forced labor not as capital, but rather as *relation of domination (Herrschaftsverhältnis)* . . . and has value [to the owner] only as gratification, not as wealth itself, and which can therefore never create *general industriousness.*" Rather than seeing civilizations as "converging," Marx looked to the culture of capitalism to liberate existence from natural necessity by introducing ambition and industriousness. In the first version of the NHS, capitalism is appreciated by putting John D. Rockefeller on trial.

Every major nineteenth-century thinker (Tocqueville, Marx, and Weber, among the giants) saw America as having broken away from feudal Europe, while the NHS insists that America must be understood as having "converged" with pre-modern civilization. But the ultimate validity of the NHS turns on its interpretation of America's political founding, which Director Nash sees as a social historian and articulates in *The Urban Crucible.* As a result the standards document perpetuates many of the false claims about the American Revolution that Bernard Bailyn has so learnedly challenged: The Revolution transforms social relations and overthrows the "old regime"; it eliminates widespread suffrage restrictions that supposedly suppressed democracy; ends deferences and class structures; and, above all, "reinforces the belief of critics of late twentieth-century liberalism that the modern capitalist world, with its inequities, dominated by the ethic of possessive individualism, is a repudiation, a reversal, not the fulfillment, of the communitarian idealism of the original, true, American Revolution." The spirit of '76 represented none of these things. "Nor," Bailyn continues, with the thesis of Nash and other social historians in mind, "have the efforts to locate the roots of the revolution in progressive impoverishment of working-class protest succeeded."

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But they have succeeded in the NHS, where working-class protest parades itself through the text until it seems as though the only meaning of history lies in the shouts coming from the streets. In the NHS, 1968 lives!

What Happened to George Washington?

The NHS reads more like a prison house of group categories than an analysis of freedom based on natural rights and power as individual growth and self-development. It is also straddling an embarrassing incompatibility in thinking it can teach the values of freedom and at the same time insist that history is the sole locus of one's identity. "Historical memory is the key to self-identity, to seeing one's place in the stream of time, and one's connectedness with all humankind. We are part of an ancient chain, and the long hand of the past is upon us—for good and for ill—just as our hands will rest on our descendents for years to come." The first sentence is psychologically questionable, the second historically debatable.

With all the emphasis on "one's place" and "one's connectedness," the NHS refused to acknowledge that people in the past had no say about the place where they found themselves and the culture into which they were born. "A culture is a system of prejudgment," writes Ernest Gellner. "Social institutions and culture are seldom chosen: they are our fate, not our choice." The multicultural bias that runs through the NHS presupposes that the identity of each ethnic group originates in its respective past culture, and hence the purpose of history is to find that identity through memory. Yet Franklin, Jefferson, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, William James, Ralph Ellison, and other American thinkers show us that whatever is worthwhile in life is not inherited but chosen, not derived from fixed antecedents but created from new challenges. "To be free," wrote Ortega y Gasset, "means to be lacking in constitutive identity, not to have subscribed to a determined being, to be able to be other than what one was." Rather than helping people free themselves from the past, the NHS traps them in their ethnic differences, and in so doing makes a virtue out of diversity at the expense of American history and the possibility of a common curriculum that will enable students to identify with something other than themselves.

Is it really in keeping with the meaning of America to insist that we are products of the "long hand of the past" and "our hands" will rest on those who follow us? It is difficult to see America, a liberal culture that has always been under the "dominance of the foreground" (Santayana), turning to the background for identity and adhering to

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tradition and custom. However Native Americans may have oriented themselves, a nation of immigrants seldom looks back, and imported slaves rarely desire to go back. The Founders themselves rejected historical precedent when formulating "a new science of politics." Jefferson declared that the "earth belongs to the living," and he would have been appalled at the idea that the "hands" of the present generation should rest on the shoulders of the future; Emerson urged not backward but "onward thinking"; Lincoln believed Americans must "disenthrall" themselves from the past, "and then we shall be saved."

But Lincoln, whose tragic sense of history resembled Nietzsche's, also believed that we must know when to forget the past and when to remember it. Thus he lamented that the "mystic chords of memory" might fade away, disappearing like fallen oaks. He had in mind the "glory" of the Revolution and the "towering genius" of George Washington. Lincoln represents a marvelous synthesis: he could worship an aloof aristocrat such as Washington and at the same time identify with the working classes. Lincoln had, as he said in his eulogy of Henry Clay, "a strong sympathy with the oppressed everywhere, and an ardent wish for their elevation." He also understood that America must move in two directions simultaneously, for while its economic development headed the country toward the future, its political meaning derived from the past. Hence to understand the significance of America we must "return to the fountain whose waters spring close by the blood of Revolution," and he looked to Washington not only as a military leader but as the exemplar of political conduct. During the Mexican War Lincoln judged President Polk against "the Washington standards of virtue" and asked him to answer the questions that congressmen were asking "as Washington would have answered them."

In the first NHS version, the name *Washington* is mentioned twice, once when students are asked to construct a dialogue between him and an Indian chief, and again when students are asked to couple two leaders in order to compare them, a strange fate for a figure in history who was once regarded as incomparable. The revised NHS also mentions him twice, again as a "leader" and also a "founder," no doubt to satisfy its patriotic critics who want their heroes back on the pedestal. The first slight was probably owing to the NHS's distaste for "a white-oriented hero-worshipping history," to use the words of the Director. But it seems that the Director's own personal pique is in direct violation of the NHS's very criteria. "Comprehensible historical narratives require," it is emphatically stated under "Historical Comprehension," "that students develop historical perspective, the ability to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there. By studying the literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts,

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and artifacts of past peoples, students should learn to avoid 'present-mindedness' by not judging the past solely in terms of norms and values of today, but taking into account the historical context in which the event unfolded."

How can students describe the past on its own terms and avoid being present-minded, when an all-too-present-minded NHS has denied them the possibility of seeing the past as it had once been seen because the document's own norms and values dictate what is and what is not to be in American history? As long as the NHS prevails, whether the first or even the second version, students will never know the stature that Washington once commanded, not only in the United States but in South America and in Europe. For more than a century, Washington remained the supreme symbol of political virtue among such leaders as Simón Bolívar, José Martí, and others who did not want to see their own revolutions deviate from the promises of freedom and end up with some form of Bonapartism. Lord Byron, a man of the Left who devoted his life to the cause of freedom, taking on "Tory scoundrels" in England and the "barbarian" Holy Alliance on the Continent, aptly described the stirring memory of the man who has disappeared from American history:

> Where may the wearied eye repose
> When gazing on the Great;
> Where neither guilty glory glows,
> Nor despicable state?
> Yes—one—the first—the last—the best—
> The Cincinnatus of the West,
> Whom envy dared not hate
> Bequeathed the name of Washington,
> To make the man blush there was but one!

Why did the NHS refuse to allow students of history the knowledge, pleasure, and inspiration that might be obtained from "gazing on the great"? Whether or not great leaders shape the course of history and actualize the spirit of an age is a philosophical riddle. But the NHS was so biased in its selection and emphasis, and in such gross violation of even its own standards, that it seemed oblivious to the very advice it offered. History, the NHS announced, "trains students to detect bias, to weigh evidence, and to evaluate arguments, thus preparing them to make sensible, independent judgments, to sniff out spurious appeals to history by partisan pleaders, to distinguish between anecdote and analysis."

A curious statement coming from a document that can neither distinguish history from anthropology nor "detect bias" in its own

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contrived curriculum with its "spurious appeals" to redemption from below and afar. This deep self-deception remains as characteristic of the revised NHS as of the first version. Thus one can only wonder if students will ever be aware of how and why progress took place in history. Noting that history stagnates when the individual feels powerless, Bertrand Russell wrote:

> There has been in recent times a dangerous tendency, not unconnected with totalitarianism, to think only in terms of whole communities, and to ignore the contributions of the individual. But consider: some man or men invented the wheel, but in the American continent it was unknown until the white man introduced it. Probably it was not one man who made the invention, but several men, starting from round logs used as rollers; however that may be, the difference that these men made to civilization is immeasurable. The need of individual genius is shown by the fact that the Mayas and the Incas, though in some ways highly civilized, never hit upon the simple invention. The difference between our world and the world before the industrial revolution is due to the discoveries and inventions of a small number of men; if by some misfortune, a few thousand men of exceptional ability had perished in infancy, the technique of production would now be very little different from what it was in the 18th century. Individuals can achieve great things, and the teacher of history ought to make this clear to his pupils. For without hope nothing of importance is accomplished.

In rejecting such wise words as nothing more than "the great man" theory imposed by "a white-oriented hero-worshipping history," the NHS deprives us of both hope and history itself.

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The Strange Fate of the American Boarding School

DAVID V. HICKS

IMAGINE THE HEAD OF A SCHOOL like Andover or Choate consulting the oracle at Delphi as late as ten years ago. In uncharacteristically lucid prose, the oracle describes a society with declining confidence in its public schools and growing awareness of education's importance to the work of nations and the success of individuals in the twenty-first century. Speaking for the oracle, the priest of Pythian Apollo anticipates the benefits to boarding schools of multiculturalism at home and Americanization abroad, assuring vast new markets for these schools by the year 1995. He goes on to predict a steady rise in the number of adolescents, and, even more to the point, a redistribution of wealth that gives families with incomes in the richest fifth—the families from which schools like Andover and Choate have always drawn their tuition-paying students—a dramatic increase in their already high standard of living.

Would not the fact that more two-earner families will account for part of this increase dispose these families to seek boarding schools for their children? Would not the heads of Andover and Choate, with more reason than Croesus, conclude that the American boarding school was about to enlarge its demesne and expand its influence?

All these auspicious facts notwithstanding, the American boarding school—Andover, Choate, Groton, St. Paul's, and others—is in trouble, an endangered species of the independent school genus. In the last ten years, boarding schools have lost almost 10 percent of their enrollment. This has occurred in spite of growing interest in American boarding schools among international students, who now account for approximately 12 percent of the students in these schools. In 1985, there were forty-five boarding schools; now there are thirty-

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nine. For those schools that are predominantly boarding but also accept day students, the comparable numbers are 131 and 124. Today there are 32,434 pre-collegiate boarding students in America as opposed to 34,594 a decade ago. These numbers contrast sharply with the general trend in independent, or private, education, where enrollment has climbed 22 percent over the same period, and the number of day schools in the National Association of Independent Schools has risen from 867 to 940. (All statistics relating to independent schools in this article derive from *NAIS Statistics 1995*, Volume 1, a publication of the National Association of Independent Schools.)

Even Andover and Choate, boarding schools with national reputations and impressive endowments, have recently announced that they will reduce their size, and schools as deep in tradition as Northfield Mount Hermon and Kent have had difficulty filling their beds. At St. Paul's, a school notable for the support of its alumni, eighty children of alumni applied for admission in 1983; in 1993 only thirty-seven applied. This steep decline in alumni interest is reflected at schools as adored by their alumni as Groton and Deerfield as well. Why has the American boarding school somehow lost its market or failed to find a new one in an America—and in a world—desperate for good schools?

Traditionalists blame the hidden culture in boarding schools for their waning appeal to parents worried about the safety, health, and moral development of their children. They cite such studies as Louis M. Crosier's *Casualties of Privilege*, which describe these schools as places where drug use, bullying, eating disorders, and sexual activity are "the common currency of social acceptance and individual prowess." In an era of increasing violence and disorder, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, addictive and destructive pressures and temptations, parents hesitate to entrust their children to schools that are either unwilling to acknowledge their destructive aspects or unable to assert control over them.

Pragmatists are more inclined to cite the high cost of a boarding-school education relative to the cost of the local day school. They express concern about the cumulative cost of private tuition when added to four years at an Ivy League university, now costing more than $30,000 a year. They want to know what the boarding school offers by way of academic preparation for college that the day school is not already providing, sometimes with more rigor and imagination, often with better measured results. That attending an elite boarding school no longer guarantees admission to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton makes the investment seem even shakier.

In 1993–94, the average boarding-school student was charged $20,621 for tuition, room, and board, whereas his or her secondary

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day-school counterpart paid $9,459 in tuition and fees. When Catholic high schools are included in this comparison, the disparity in expense between the boarding and day school grows more pronounced. Yet this disparity is as nothing compared to the difference between costs per pupil, which at a boarding school in the same year averaged between $27,892 and $35,004 (depending on whether it accepted day students) as opposed to the day-school cost of $11,644. Can the dubious socializing benefits of the boarding-school experience really be worth more than twice the expense (and three times the cost) of a day school?

The American boarding school, critics feel, has strayed from its traditional mission of educating an unselfish and virtuous elite for positions of influence and leadership. Nor is it accomplishing the pragmatic function of pioneering educational reforms that offer young people superior preparation for college, work, and life. These criticisms sound very much like those that were made of the American academy and that helped to launch the boarding-school movement almost a century and a half ago. (The American academy predated the boarding school and loosely resembled the monastic schools of medieval Europe. Students attending such academies as Exeter, Andover, and Deerfield boarded in town; and the academies, like today's public schools, assumed very limited responsibility for their students' lives beyond the classroom. The boarding school, by contrast, imitated the English public school in housing and feeding its students and in expecting teachers to assume pastoral care and parental responsibility for them.)

By the middle of the nineteenth century, according to the historian James McLachlan, "the American academy was not educating the Christian scholars and gentlemen needed to raise the standards of American higher education and American culture as a whole." The time was ripe for a new model of education, and such men as Joseph Green Cogswell with his experiment at the Round Hill School had already begun to reinvent the American school in the image of the family living in a state of nature—or more precisely in a prepared environment, like the garden where nature is carefully arranged and tended. The European educational theory and practice of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and his disciples Philipp Emanuel von Fallenburg, Johann Friedrich Herbart, and Fredrick Foebel profoundly influenced Cogswell, but his romantic theory of education came straight from Rousseau, and its successful application awaited the emergence of a self-conscious class of monied, Anglophile, and well-born city dwellers who were as concerned about the corrupting and enervating effects of

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urban life on their children as they were about the lack of scholarship and moral direction in the academies.

Of course, the notion of an educated elite predates Cogswell, Pestalozzi, and the industrial barons of the Gilded Age. In this country we find a lively discussion of it in the correspondence between John Adams of New England and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, as good a place as any to begin to understand the traditional mission of the boarding school and its place in American society. In a series of letters begun on August 14, 1813, John Adams mounted a spirited and erudite defense of aristocracy. Adams argued that the *aristoi* (that is, the best citizens)—whether by reason of their "beauty, wealth, birth, genius, or virtue"—will eventually shape the destiny of any society, even a democratic one; and any system of government or arrangement of institutions that refuses to acknowledge this fact is unrealistic and will not long endure.

Rather than allow himself to be drawn into an argument with his old friend about the predominant role of birth and wealth in legitimizing the aristocracy, Jefferson, as was his way, avoided becoming contentious, accepted the premise, and advanced a novel theory of education based upon it. He distinguished between a "natural" aristocracy composed of those with virtue and talent and an "artificial" aristocracy founded on wealth and birth. "The natural aristocracy," he went on to say, "I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. . . . The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy."

On this basis, Jefferson proposed a system of free schools for all children in primary grades. In these schools, the "natural" aristocrats would be identified, shining forth like gold nuggets in a prospector's pan, and students with unusually sturdy virtues and superior talents would be plucked out and sent on for further education at public expense to grammar schools and universities. Until recently, one could see some of Jefferson's idealism glittering behind every reform movement in public education.

Reading these letters today, especially the arguments of Adams, comes as quite a shock, and even Jefferson would be dismissed as a rank elitist by the educational establishment. Because of our modern devotion to democracy and all its forms, we lack an understanding of the American aristocratic tradition (represented by old Federalists such as Adams) against which Jacksonian democracy rebelled. Without this understanding, however, we cannot fully understand the boarding school's original purpose or its huge appeal to the families whose wealth and power grew so spectacularly after the Civil War.

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The elitist mission of the boarding school was meant to reflect John Adams's realistic view of the human condition. Why, he asked, should we reject good birth in humans as a basis for assigning potential worth when we accept this as the first principle of animal husbandry and bet our money on it at the track? Besides, the wellborn and the wealthy, whether or not they possess virtue and talent and whether or not we like it, exercise a disproportionate influence on society, and this is all the more reason to attend carefully to their nurture and education.

Sharing some of Adams's realism and being himself the beneficiary of a romantic education at Cogswell's short-lived Round Hill School, Dr. George Cheney Shattuck of Boston founded in 1855 St. Paul's, one of the earliest boarding schools, as "a school the principal but not the only object of which," he later wrote, "is to educate the sons of wealthy inhabitants of large cities." But Shattuck at St. Paul's and the founders of many boarding schools that followed hoped to offer rich boys much more than a rustic retreat away from the crassness and materialism of the Gilded Age. They, like Jefferson, had their idealism. They believed that an education in the spirit of Rousseau could turn an "artificial" aristocrat into a "natural" one, thereby combining the advantages of birth and wealth with the attainments of talent and virtue, and providing the young republic with a ruling class that would stand against the greed and folly of what Theodore Roosevelt liked to call "the perfidious democracy." In these aims, the boarding-school advocates joined a rich classical (and aristocratic) European tradition that is reflected in Alexis de Tocqueville's brilliant analysis of American democracy.

Tocqueville believed that "in democratic societies, each citizen is habitually busy with the contemplation of a very petty object, which is himself." Plato, another keen observer of democratic experiments, also believed this, and they both predicted a prompt and bloody end to the democratic society that allowed the individual's self-centered and self-indulgent tendencies to go unchecked. Both men emphasized the importance of negating these tendencies through the education and indoctrination of the young. For them, the school's purpose lay in response to the question: What kind of education will make the democratical youth most public spirited, great souled, and self-denying—and, implicitly, least self-centered, pleasure seeking, and avaricious? However old-fashioned these concerns may sound today, they are still at the heart of the debate over the future role and significance of the boarding school.

Whatever can be said either academically or socially against the elite boarding schools of America's past—and much can and has been

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said—they have had as their primary object the discouragement of self-centeredness. Most of them in their physical arrangements provided a spartan training for students who would later assume influential roles in an "Athenian" society. Endicott Peabody, Groton's founding rector, thought "American parents had 'a tendency to over-indulge their children, to want to make life easy for them, a natural result of which is that their children sometimes lack intellectual and moral and physical fibre.' At Groton and other schools the students were provided with a considerable amount of corrective salutary deprivation. At St. Paul's and Groton the boys roomed in barren little cubicles, and if they were ever indulged in anything as sybaritic as a warm shower, the fact has gone unrecorded." Historically, one did not send one's son to a school like Groton to secure his place in society. That place was already secure. One sent a boy to Groton to save him from the selfishness and softness of his secure place.

These schools were founded, in their own minds at least, to serve public, not private, interests. They were for America's "artificial," not her "natural," aristocrats, to use Jefferson's terms; yet true to Jefferson's intent, they wished to make virtuous and brave those who, through the accident of birth, would someday exercise great power and influence. It was not so much scholars that these schools sought to train, but high-minded and public-spirited gentlemen. They hoped to form unselfish and wise habits in the sons of the rich, and to do so, they thought, required the isolation of a rural setting and the rigor of a strenuous and well-ordered life.

In his 1910 Centennial Address at the Lawrenceville School, Woodrow Wilson described the genius of the boarding school in this way:

> A residential school is . . . an attempt to establish a community, and by attempting to establish a community it recognizes this principle: that education does not consist in instruction; that it consists in instruction *plus* the processes of life which make instruction useful and valid. It recognizes the fact that the habits of the mind are of the essence of the whole process; that a mind not put to use itself is not a mind awakened and is not a mind educated. . . . A great school like this does not stop with what it does in the class room; it organizes athletics and sports of every kind, it organizes *life* from morning to night; and it does so when at its best by an intimate association of the teacher with the pupil, so that the impact of the mature mind upon the less mature will be constant and influential.

A highly prescriptive and sedulously organized place, the boarding school profoundly adopted the Christian faith as its organizing principle. This provided ritual, ceremony, and a coherent set of norms, although it seldom invited a confession of faith or inspired a conver-

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sion, as many priestly heads, such as Louis Auchincloss's fabled Rector of Justin (said to have been modeled on Endicott Peabody), lamented at one time or another.

Games, now called athletics, served as the other organizing principle. They toughened up the boys and girls, taught them perseverance and courage, and emphasized the need for teamwork and loyalty to others. Games—likely to be the most enduring legacy of these schools—stoked the furnace of ambition and fired the will to excel. All of this physical exertion not only heightened the drama of life, but tempered the character of the athlete who was expected at all times to show grace in victory and equanimity in defeat.

This at least was the beau ideal. If the old boarding schools failed to teach their students a wholesome regard for people not of their own race, color, creed, or class, at least they passed on moral, intellectual, and even aesthetic standards that enabled their graduates to discern good from evil, to judge opinions by their reasonableness, and to be discriminating in their choice of friends and amusements. Although they restricted their students' academic and personal freedoms, they did instill in them rigorous habits of mind and courteous habits of behavior that young people will not usually pick up from a steady diet of television or acquire from our popular culture. If by their very existence these schools seemed to undermine the notion of equality, they did provide an antidote to the vast leveling and conformist forces of democracy. They stood in some instances for truths much deeper than the egalitarian myth—to wit, that all men and women strive for superiority, not equality. It is, of course, in this striving, within the rules and for higher purposes (whether defined as the victory of the team or the greatest good for the greatest number), that American citizens are educated and ennobled and their democratic institutions preserved.

For a while, the American boarding school did seem to raise the level of American higher education and of American culture in general, and it certainly converted the academies to its way of doing things and exercised a profound influence on public schools in everything from child-centered learning to physical education. It is notable that Franklin Roosevelt, Dean Acheson, John Kennedy, Archibald Cox, and a host of other prominent public servants of this century were graduates of these schools.

Whether many will agree with this assessment of the boarding school's ability to realize its ideal in the past may now be beside the point. Much has now changed, and the American boarding school seems caught somewhere between wanting to preserve its mission and traditions and satisfy its historic (although shrinking) source of stu-

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dents, on the one hand, and changing its mission and methods and finding new sources of students, on the other. The compromise that it has tried to strike seems to please fewer and fewer people, and the modern hybrid that remains appears increasingly to serve private rather than public interests while offering little chance of raising the level of American higher education or of American culture in general. The future of the boarding school requires that this drift toward compromise be challenged. This is a time when—with the proper vision and courage—the boarding school might once again be able to offer leadership and produce leaders.

In many respects, America needs the traditional boarding school and its mission more than ever. The decision of these schools, taken thirty years ago, to broaden their relevance by making room for a "natural" aristocracy of all races, colors, creeds, and classes would argue for an expanded and more important role for them in American society. Never did the cultural coherence, well-defined values, and sympathetic relationships fostered by the family model of the traditional boarding school seem more attractive and necessary. Why, then, are boarding schools not flourishing in the nineties?

Like the American family itself, these schools have been largely deconstructed and are in danger of becoming dysfunctional. This deconstruction is what upsets the traditionalists and makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the boarding school to adopt organizing principles or to accept responsibility for the formation of virtuous and wise habits in its students. To a certain extent, this deconstruction was deliberate and well intentioned, aided by new theories in psychology, by a desire to be more open and inclusive, and by reaction against the excessive rigidity of the old school. Yet, at the same time, much of the old school's dismantling was beyond its control.

First, the sprawling of suburbia and the amazing expansion of America's highway system after World War II conspired against the isolation of these schools, and the contemporary revolution in technology and telecommunications threatens to complete their integration into the larger society. Television, cable, E-mail, and now the Internet prevent these schools, even if they wanted to, from forming a culture that is walled off from the popular mainstream culture of adolescent America. Moreover, most of these schools—both for financial reasons and because they find themselves in the midst of suburbia—have admitted large numbers of day students. The day-school population not only increases access to the popular culture and reduces the school's influence over its students, but it defeats the school's efforts to organize life. Evening activities are limited, Saturday

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classes canceled, required school worship on Sunday done away with, and in time the boarders follow their day-school counterparts home or to places of amusement on the weekends. The deconstructed boarding school looks and acts more like a day school, except without parents.

Second, the inability of America's "artificial" aristocracy to remain stable and united, and, some might argue, to have children and to keep their families together has helped to loose the moorings—for better and for worse—of these schools. Although the old-monied families still exert a considerable influence and control over their alma maters, they often do so in ways that reflect their own social and financial insecurities. No longer sure of being able to send their sons and daughters to Harvard or to preserve their children's standing in the world, they are more likely to understand the school as a means of social or financial advancement than as a source of otherworldly wisdom and natural goodness. To some extent, the selfishness born of mounting social and financial anxiety among this class has caused the boarding school to do what it has often been accused of doing, but now with more reason—namely, to serve private rather than public interests. This may seem to increase its appeal, but it also undermines its integrity and contributes to its deconstruction.

Third, boarding schools are struggling to survive in a society that has redefined the adolescent as a consumer—a consumer of fast foods, movies, fashions, videos, CDs, drugs, alcohol, pornography, cigarettes, sports, and pop heroes. Adolescent appetites, not adult concerns, dominate the boarding-school market, and to compete for this new consumer's attention, the boarding school has tried to appeal to the mercurial tastes and insatiable appetites of the adolescent, investing heavily in more comfortable and private accommodations, telephones and other technologies, and a smorgasbord of choice in food, curriculum, and amusements, while emphasizing in its costly marketing the wonderful world of freedom, fun, and friendships to be found in boarding-school life. Rigorous regimens and "corrective salutary deprivations" are out—at least so far as the selling of the school is concerned.

Fourth, the boarding school has been no more successful than society itself in finding a way to sustain a coherent and unified culture while affirming individualism and cultural diversity. In the boarding school this challenge is particularly urgent and unsettling, since it strikes at the heart of the "family" ideal and undermines the normative purposes of a traditional education. It is difficult to conceive of the school as a family or as a force for cultural coherence and normative consensus when schools do not dare to name their gods and heroes,

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defend their norms and beliefs, celebrate the good and censor the bad—as they understand them—for fear of offending someone or failing to give equal time and weight to a contrary opinion or another point of view.

Fifth, contributing to the deconstruction of these schools is the fragmenting effect of descriptive developmental theories that have replaced the prescriptive moral aims of an earlier time. Modern pedagogy is rooted in a precise understanding of who the adolescent is and of the peculiarities of this stage in human development rather than in an idealized vision of the adult who the adolescent might be or is meant to become. Developmental theories stress the adolescent's search for identity and the importance of freedom and experimentation in making this quest, and with these theories comes an overwhelming emphasis on the individual, even at the expense of the community, and on personality as defined by one's inner feelings and appetites rather than on character as formed by codes of conduct and standards of behavior that exist outside and before the individual. In this brave new world, the student's self-esteem is all important, and it is thought better to affirm the adolescent in the quest than to hold him or her accountable to some prescriptive norm or arbitrary standard and thereby constrain self-expression and wound self-esteem.

Finally, one must wonder if the nineteenth century's utopian impulse to form authentically human and morally sensitive communities is any longer possible in an era when few are willing to give up their putative rights of privacy and self-expression for the accomplishment of such a goal. The modern boarding school, like the residential college, looks more like what Josiah Royce called "a heap of separate selves" splintered into academic departments and individual specializations and protected by an assumption of entitlements that allows each person to pursue his or her interests without the inconvenient communal demands of collaboration and compromise with one's peers or of accountability and obedience to school authorities.

By allowing their adult and adolescent "cultures" to drift apart for essentially selfish reasons, the American boarding school (often mirroring the American family) has destroyed the very characteristics that enabled it to revitalize education more than a century ago—that is, the power, in Woodrow Wilson's words, "to organize life from morning to night" and to promote "an intimate association of the teacher with the pupil, so that the impact of the mature mind upon the less mature will be constant and influential."

While traditionalists, unwilling or unable to relinquish the old boarding-school ideal, may view these changes with regret and even

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alarm, pragmatists wonder why these schools cannot redefine themselves to remain not only workable but beneficial to society and to those who attend them. The fact is that a significant national resource remains tied up in these schools, and, with sufficient imagination and will, there seems no reason why they cannot find ways to raise the level of American higher education and of American culture in general. Why, then, in spite of their often superior resources, are they failing to compete effectively with day schools? Why are they not offering new models of learning and community in a society apparently hungry for both?

Probably the most important reason for this failure derives from the very nature—which also holds one of the great strengths—of these highly traditional institutions. They are good at conserving values and ideas, and slow to change. It took the cataclysmic social upheaval of the sixties to sweep away many of their old ways of doing things; and, perhaps not surprisingly, these schools almost immediately embraced a new set of orthodoxies that not only thwarted their traditional aims but complicated academic innovation and reform.

Although they have made gains in math and science in recent years, the strength of these schools continues to be handicapped by their lack of emphasis on the more technical subjects. Together, math and science spell engineering—one of the least popular career choices for an "artificial" aristocrat, and children of privilege are still happier expressing their opinions and writing and talking about themselves than studying natural phenomena and striving for exactitude and objectivity. Developmental theory unintentionally encourages this ancient habit, yet it is difficult to imagine these schools providing academic leadership in the next century with anemic or unimaginative programs in math, science, and technology. Instead, boarding schools need to challenge the self-absorption and career predilections of their students. An early introduction to engineering might stimulate more interest in science and math while building the problem-solving, collaborative, and technological skills crucial to success in the careers that most of their students will choose.

Something about the demands of boarding-school teaching and the insularity—if no longer isolation—of boarding-school life discourages genuine innovation and reform. Change of any high order of magnitude requires hours and hours of purposeful discussion and planning with colleagues outside the normal routines of the school day. In certain respects, the boarding school would seem ideally suited to meet this challenge since everyone usually lives at the school. But in fact this is seldom the case. While younger teachers are heavily engaged with duties on the playing fields or in the dormitories, older

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teachers are often least enthusiastic about the prospect of disruptive change or the imposition on their personal time by long hours of planning. Nor are senior members sanguine about handing over to their junior colleagues the responsibility for directing the school's academic programs and reforms.

Because boarding schools are fighting among themselves for bigger shares of a smaller market, they cannot afford to admit weakness. They must change to assuage the fears of the traditionalists and to meet the demands of the pragmatists, but they must do so without giving up the claim of being near perfect. This need for self-congratulatory marketing contradicts the need for change and inadvertently plays into the hands of those within the school who defend the status quo. In this sense, the truism of the business world that institutions will only tolerate change if both a vision *and* a threat are present works against those boarding schools seeking to make substantial improvements while refusing to admit weakness or vulnerability.

Parents are the constituency most likely to demand higher academic standards, more accountability, and better discipline in general, although not always in reference to their own children. Yet boarding schools are furthest removed and often least attuned to this constituency. Unlike day-school parents who live in the neighborhood of the school and are running into teachers and administrators at church, at the barber or beauty shop, and at the supermarket, boarding-school parents receive most of the news about school from their children, and they are less likely to exercise their independent judgment and more prone to see the school through the eyes of their children than they were a generation ago. By making the happiness of the child rather than the excellence of the school the parents' first priority, the school removes—or at least compromises—a powerful constituency for change and exaggerates the tendency of boarding schools to cater to their adolescent audiences and to initiate reforms that, if at all, appeal to their students. The adolescent is the consumer, and the consumer is never wrong.

The boarding school, in my view, would do well to jettison its romantic family illusions and attempt to build more deliberately upon the community idea. As a Victorian family with its well-established hierarchies, inviolable codes, and blood ties, the family metaphor might have worked in the past, but in modern times it is both misleading and confusing, suggesting a sentimental dependency to some and internecine dysfunction to others. Community acknowledges the need for a social contract, a conscious and deliberate coming together of individuals who are willing to put aside their differences and limit

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their desires to achieve certain ends that none could achieve alone.

If they are to give their students a vision of how society should work, boarding schools must think hard about what it is that authentically human and just communities demand of themselves and of everyone in them. They must offer their students and teachers a compelling vision of their obligations to one another and to the community—a vision that in many respects will be at odds with the assumptions and entitlements of current popular culture. At a minimum, this vision will require adolescents and adults to spend more time together so that the culture of neither is hidden, and it will find ways of involving parents in the social contract and of drawing them into the town meeting. Both in the naming and enforcing of norms and in the encouragement of healthy and honest relationships, boarding schools must appeal to the idealism in the young, not to their self-interest.

At the same time, the American boarding school must offer measurably superior academic preparation for college. To do so, it needs to define its own academic priorities and to reinvest heavily in these priorities—accepting the risks involved in testing innovative methods or unconventional ideas and making the hard decisions to cut back in areas of low priority. These schools must resist the trend toward costly therapies and enrichments in their efforts to meet the needs of everyone. To an extent, boarding schools are declining because they are playing it safe and trying to please everyone. Often in the armor-plated name of caring or inclusivity, they end up appealing to no one and set themselves the impossible task of having to meet everyone's needs. Instead, they should respond unequivocally to the ills in American society and to the deficiencies of American education as they understand them. Only then will they find a market whose needs they can meet with the resources available to them and will they discover teaching methods that will raise the level of American higher education and, quite possibly, of American culture itself.

The fate of the boarding school is not sealed, but the resurgence and possible leadership of boarding schools in American education depend, it seems to me, on a bold reassertion of their individuality and an innovative use of their resources. They will save themselves individually, not collectively; yet if they succeed in doing so, they will revitalize one another. At the same time, it is not hard to imagine that the boarding school with the best chance to prosper will be the one that reclaims the key elements of its original mission. The "artificial" and the "natural" *aristoi* of modern-day America may be demographically different from those of previous eras, but their needs and their country's need for their best have never changed.

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Visiting Great Aunt Eugenya by the Chesapeake

ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

Early each spring, I visit her under
the tall blue spruce, yank the first shoots
of pokeweed, honeysuckle and berry briars,
without disturbing the cardinals' nest.

In April her nearly blind eyes
could still distinguish the blaze of azaleas,
and she was always surprised
to have made it through one more winter.

* * *

She'd dictated her will while we sipped
raspberry wine from jelly glasses: "Cast
my ashes into a garden. . . . " Then,
with her elfin smile, "Also into the sea."

We drank to her ninety-first year.
How fiercely her fingers gripped mine
that May afternoon as the strange
dry gargle churned in her throat.

I'd just rented a farm near the bay,
was still setting in asparagus roots.
I dragged out the canoe, scattered half
off the island where tides run strong.

Then I took the trowel, dug in the rest
under the spruce alone at the edge
of the farmer's field. Several times
a summer I cut back the weeds.

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His combine roars by like a tank as he
harvests his wheat, soybeans and corn,
the last row so close he grazes the boughs
unaware she's here in his sandy soil.

* * *

In Russia in World War One, she nursed
the wounded on wavering battlefields,
blessed the dying. . . . How many unmarked
graves fertilize that black earth. . . .

After the Revolution, the Bolsheviks seized
her family estate for one more *kolkhoz.*
She worked as a nurse in a prison camp,
later escaped by train to Estonia, then

a place by a German lake, with pines.
The Nazis took it in World War Two, made her
manage a farm with *Ostarbeiter,* slave workers,
under their rifles in Poland.

Tiny, thin as the prisoners, she shielded them
from the guards, shared her own rations.
She led the horses, steered the plough,
planted and dug potatoes by hand.

The Nazis retreated, the Red Army advanced.
She hitched up the horses, piled refugees
in her cart, trekked West, caught a boat,
settled at last in a Washington flat.

* * *

I imagine her heart
is nourishing this singular tree,
blackberries sprout from her fingers,
chanterelles from her skull,

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reassured that part of herself
is planted in *terra firma* although
another portion will travel forever,
flutterkicking through foreign waves. . . .

* * *

Now I must move on. The farmer already
ploughs my asparagus under. Will he think
to clear the pokeweed, honeysuckle and briars
before they entangle her spruce?

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Celebration of the Last Day

DOUG TALLEY

Vidi descendentem de caelo a Deo
paratam, sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo.
—The Revelation of John, 21:2

With the song of our wedding day
clouds are white, the skies always blue.
It will always be just so.
And when you ask, Who we are
in such a color, on such a day,
a voice from the clouds
may respond with a cry,
like an Italian fruttivendolo
chanting his goods along the street,

"Le belle mele, le banane, i limoni!"

Who then are we on such a day?
Apples, perhaps, or bananas, or lemons,
the happy fruit of a happy day!

Of course, you tug at me and ask,
Can a husband think of nothing else
to make a bride beautiful
on this, her wedding day,
the wedding day of all the saints,

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beneath the skies that are always blue,
beneath the eyes of God?
And the very moment you tug and ask
I have a voice will tumble from the sky
in the language of the angels no less,

"È un' angela che vola, lei,
un' angela che vola!"

She is indeed an angel that flies.
It will always be just so,
beneath the skies that are always blue,
beneath the eyes of God,
one kiss removed from cloud and sky.

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An Autobiographer's Lies

ANDREW HUDGINS

Memory is a strange Bell—
Jubilee, and Knell.
—Emily Dickinson

VOWS ARE DANGEROUS. As a freshman in high school, when I read poems only for class assignments and even then reluctantly, I vowed that if I ever wrote anything as silly as a poem, at least I'd never write about anything as silly as flowers. Flowers struck me as effeminate, non-utilitarian, decorative at best, and, at worst, an utter waste of time and money. As a subject for poetry, they combined those shortcomings with a complete lack of serious engagement with the world and its ills. In time, I became a gardener, and as a poet I've returned again and again to the traditional subject that I so scorned, finding it fecund with meaning and rich with emotional significance. And I've enjoyed the uneasy honor of having one of my lines quoted in the Smith and Hawken gardening catalogue next to a photograph of, and a paean to, a Scottish manure fork.

In college, in mild revolt against my Southern Baptist upbringing, I vowed I'd never write about religious subjects, which seemed to me artistically spent and intellectually vacant. Later, because they were all the mode in the 1960s and 1970s, I vowed I wouldn't write poems about paintings. Making art about art appeared to me both to be parasitic and to place the second work of art, the poem in this case, at an extra and enfeebling remove from life. I ended up writing a book of poems, *The Never-Ending*, that has as one of its recurring subjects the life of Christ as portrayed in paintings.

In similar fashion I vowed, because I was tired of so-called "confes-

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sional poetry" with its often lurid self-revelations, not to write about myself. So, probably as a result of that vow, I wrote a childhood memoir, in poems, *The Glass Hammer: A Southern Childhood.* But when I broke my vow, finally admitting that what I'd begun *was* an autobiography, I made another vow: that I, as I alone could do, would tell the honest truth. This vow was a reiteration of a vow I'd made as a child. By age twelve I'd read dozens of childhood memoirs with sentimental portraits of a loving if harried Mama, a loving if occasionally frustrated and angry Papa, and a supporting if moralistic community. Despite some obstacles, success came so easily for the gifted child that it seemed inevitable—and all I could think was that those charmed lives, fascinating as they were, were nothing like mine.

A few years later, having read dozens more childhood memoirs, I began to say, "They're lying. All those writers are just lying. Life isn't that simple." But as I thought about it, I began to see that they weren't lying consciously; they just didn't remember. And I vowed then, with all the plentiful rage and gravity that a fifteen-year-old Southern boy steeped in codes of honor and manhood can bring to a vow, that if I ever wrote about my life, I'd do it while I was still angry and that my book would be brutal, ruthless, scorchingly honest. I'd blow the lid off the pot, dammit.

But as soon as I began writing in earnest, I realized that some lies—though now we literary sorts call them "fictions"—are inevitable. Others are merely convenient. Autobiography is in some ways a translation of actuality onto the page and in other ways a selective and imaginative re-creation of it, a work of art—and the two roles can go to bed together and enjoy their uneasy congress only by lying to each other. But the lies are loving lies, told with hope and good intentions, and I'd like to go into some of the ways autobiography—or at least mine—lies. I've arranged these fictions in ascending order of transgression from misdemeanor to felony.

1. The first lie, the whitest lie, the lie that hardly troubles my conscience at all, is the lie of narrative cogency. It consists of clearing out the narrative underbrush, so the story, like a flowering crab apple in a lot overgrown with sumac, can be more easily seen and appreciated. Exposition, explanation, and qualification are boring. They try the reader's patience. And with its emphasis on condensed intensity, poetry is even less tolerant of them than prose. In *The Glass Hammer* I didn't bother to explain my family's frequent moves from one Air Force base to another as my father was transferred around the country. He retired in Montgomery, Alabama, where I went to high school and college, and since I long ago decided that Montgomery was my hometown, I simply set the whole book there.

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And I combined characters and incidents. Here's part of a poem called "Original Sin":

> I'd watched
> hens jab the dirty silk
> of spider webs, jerk back,
> pause, flip their heads, and swallow
> live spiders. *Only a thing*
> *that's poisonous itself*
> *eats spiders,* Grandmomma said.
> And I believed her. I'd seen them
> rake each other's raw
> red flaws until they'd crippled
> or killed a bird that could
> have been themselves. Or me.
> But when Grandmomma marched
> out to the tree, I followed
> and crowed at the hens as she
> grabbed one bird by the neck
> and snapped her wrist. Waist-high,
> held out away from her,
> the dead bird walked on air
> and flapped. I ran behind,
> crowed, clucked, and flapped my arms
> triumphantly, till Grandmomma
> said, *Shush, boy,* and I shushed.

In early versions of the poem, the versions closest to actual events, the person who calls the chickens poisonous is my aunt, not my grandmother. But having three characters in the poem—aunt, grandmother, me—complicated the scene unnecessarily and left the poem diffuse and unfocused. When I merged aunt and grandmother into one character, the scene snapped into artistic and dramatic coherence, and I was able to finish the poem. It was, I believe, a good aesthetic decision, one well worth the sacrifice of literal truth.

The problem with the lie of narrative cogency is that in life the stories don't stand clear of the underbrush; the flowering crab apple *is* obscured by sumac. So even this white lie falsifies experience: intensification and clarity are misrepresentations. But I've listened to so many well-intentioned friends agonize to get pointless facts straight, that I don't worry about this lie too much: "In the third grade, Miss Porter hit me with a ruler for . . . no, wait—I think it was the fourth grade because Daddy hadn't yet bought the green Plymouth. But, then, maybe I'm confusing Uncle Ralph's green Dodge with Daddy's Plymouth. He—Daddy, I mean—really loved that car. . . ." Torture by exactitude.

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2. If the lie of narrative cogency contracts, condenses, tightens memory, the lie of texture expands it. Some details of course are welded forever into our memories: how Grandmother smelled of Vicks VapoRub, the way Mother always mispronounced *municipal* as *mu-NINCE-ipal*, then mocked herself for not being able to say it properly. But most details slide out of our memories because they aren't important until we try to write about the past, and then they are essential because storytelling thrives on details, which enrich the texture of bare plot. The accumulation of precise and telling details is what makes the story, scene, image, line vivid in the reader's imagination, while memory tends to drop details and preserve the emotional reaction they evoked. So, in order to capture the reality of an experience, I was, in an odd paradox, sometimes forced to invent details to make it more believable.

A small example: in "Funeral Parlor Fan" I wrote about a handheld fan of the sort that's very popular in rural, un-air-conditioned churches. On one side the fan has a sentimental picture of Jesus and on the other an advertisement for a local funeral home.

> I fanned
> a little more, grew bored, and jabbed
> my brother, kicked the seat in front of me
> till, casually, my mother's hand
> dipped out and popped my head, not hard,
> with Jesus praying in the garden
> or, flipped, Hobb's Funeral Home. And just
> to hear myself talk, I'd say *ouch*
> and get another dose of Jesus,
> and slightly harder too. The beat
> resumed: tick tock, tick tock, and I
> took up the worn, two-sided fan
> and tried—small hands—to keep the beat.
> Tick: Jesus. Tock: Hobb's Funeral Home.

Though the poem says *Hobb's* Funeral Home, I can't remember what funeral home actually supplied fans to the Vineyard Baptist Church. I needed a one-syllable word and, after much flipping through books looking at names, I chose Hobb. As many hours as I sat in church, reading and rereading the back of those fans, you'd think I'd remember the name emblazoned in huge letters on them. You'd think I'd remember the name of the people who buried one of my grandfathers, both grandmothers, two uncles, one cousin, and my mother. But I don't, and this particular poem would sound unconvincing and I would sound moronic if I jerked it to a halt and admitted my ignorance.

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3. The lie of fictional convention. While every word of my poem "When I Was Saved" is literally true, I can't help feeling that this poem about my being born again and baptized into the Southern Baptist Church, because of its subject, meshes too easily with what readers anticipate when they read a book subtitled *A Southern Childhood.* Religion, anguish, sweat, guilty sex, and physical deformity are, after all, characteristics of Southern writing that readers are accustomed to expect:

> I couldn't breathe at all
> when I, damp handkerchief clamped on my mouth,
> was lowered into death. I went down easy,
> stayed, panicked, struggled, and was yanked back up,
> red-faced and dripping. After that, each Sunday
> I went to preaching early so I could sit
> behind a boy whose torn right ear did not
> attach entirely to his head. Through that
> pink gap of gristle, I'd watch the preacher shout,
> croon, soothe—between that boy's head and his ear.
> More sinners lumbered up the aisle. I longed
> to run up and again be purged of Adam,
> who was reborn each night, like Lazarus,
> by my own hand, beneath the sweat-drenched sheets.

I worry that I may have traded on elements in my life that I've come to understand are exotic to readers who did not grow up in evangelical Christian churches. One of the most disconcerting things about writing an autobiography was seeing my life, which I'd preferred to think of as unique, take on recognizable literary conventions. The autobiographer takes his or her own life as material and, once it is material, it, for some purposes, stops being life and becomes primarily material. Then it falls into categories of material, like the coming-of-age story or the Southern grotesque. I suddenly looked up from the page I was writing and saw myself not as myself, an individual, but as a character in a poem fathered by William Faulkner and carried to term by Flannery O'Connor.

Questions arise: Did they teach me to see what I see or did they teach me how to write about what I see? Or did we all drink from the well of common cultural experience? I prefer to believe the last possibility, but I suspect it's a combination of the three. One thing I don't point out in the poem, though, is that my conversion and baptism took place not in Alabama, but in San Bernardino, California, while my father was stationed at nearby Norton Air Force Base.

4. The lie of emotional evasion. The sin of omission. The things that make us evasive and shifty in life are the things we will attempt to

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slide over on the page. Sex and death are the deep sources of most euphemism and avoidance—as well as other forms of emotional flinching, ducking, dodging, fudging, and sidestepping. Though we'll write about actions we were ashamed of once but have since come to terms with, the actions and attitudes we remain ashamed of are hard to put on the page. It's difficult for me to say what I'm evasive about. If I had been deliberately evasive about something while writing the book, I'd probably still want to sidestep it; and since many evasions are self-deceptions, how can I admit to ducking a subject I'm unaware of ducking?

If I recognized that I wanted to slide over something, I made myself go right at it. One source of evasion that's especially sensitive to a Southerner is our culture's touchiest taboo at the moment: race. It's a subject that I'd tried to write about for decades, but I'd always failed. It overwhelmed anything I could say about it. It seemed to overwhelm language itself. But since I knew overlooking racism would be dishonest, I forced myself to write about it. Though I'm generally pleased with the poems that resulted, I learned that it takes a lot of energy to blast through the resistance to writing about difficult and painful subjects, and, as a consequence, the things I don't want to say are the things I say harshest and loudest. I'm afraid I may have overemphasized the anguish, unhappiness, and sorrow I felt as a child trying to come to terms with—trying to understand—the past and present racism of the world around me.

I don't think I was evasive about death. I've been obsessed with death since I was a child and, if anything, I give it too much attention in the book. But I was evasive about sex, and not because I'd enjoyed such a rollicking adolescence that I didn't want to brag or that I wished to spare the reputations of my many lovers. Rather the opposite. Raised Southern Baptist, a faith I took seriously even as I was seriously troubled by it, I didn't, in fact, have sex till I was married (well, depending on exactly how one defines sex). But on the few occasions I've shared that fact with friends, I've either been called a liar to my face or been marveled at with polite and amused sympathy. It took many attempts before I was able to mention, quickly and in passing, that my first sexual experience took place on my wedding night, and I only put it in the book because I felt I had to.

5 . Emotional evasion is merely the first step on the path that leads to the considerably more egregious lie of the re-created self. When I, as a teenager, began to write, one of my first discoveries was that I could make myself look good. This temptation is, of course, an extension of the human tendency to recount events so our motives are clear, understandable, noble, while other people's are left unexa-

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mined or put in a bad light. And in writing, with the opportunity to explain ourselves even more fully and thoughtfully, as well as to shade or shape facts, circumstances, and actions, it's easier yet to make ourselves the heroes of our own lives.

For about six months after this discovery, I was enthralled by how I could be so much wittier, shrewder, kinder, more sensitive, and more knowledgeable on the page than I am in life. I could be the me I'd always wanted to be—and without doing the hard work of attaining the virtues I claimed for myself. But it was sleazy, this self-ennobling, and I knew it was sleazy. Soon I reacted against it and vowed I wouldn't do it anymore. Maybe because I was once so in love with how I could present the reader with a new and improved version of myself, I react with almost physical revulsion when I suspect a writer is gilding his blemishes. My wife says I now take a perverse delight in putting unnecessarily ugly constructions on my own motives. Perhaps she's right. The truth is, being wrong, flawed, crude, ungracious, and incomplete is pretty much the story of my life. But it's also true that presenting myself on the page as such packs an emotional kick for both writer and reader.

Consider how I come across in "The Colonel":

> My father lifts the crippled airman's body
> and jokes about how light he is and how
> we need some rain. He holds him while the man's
> young wife strips off the yellowed linen, cracks
> white sheets above the bed and lets them drift
> across the mattress. She smooths them, tucks the corner.
> My father lays the shriveled Christian down.
> Three times one week, four times the next. A job
> he shares with someone from another church.
> He comes home ashen. And every single time,
> before he leaves the house he turns to me,
> false casually, "You want to come along?"
> "Do you need help?" I ask, and he says no.
> He leaves. I watch teevee. I'm sixteen, shit!
> And I don't want to be a soldier yet.

In the poem I refuse to assist my father in a disagreeable but noble task, though I do imply that if he'd said my help was necessary I'd have obliged. But I did prettify my actions. As I wrote about this incident, it seemed to me to show the sullen refusal of an adolescent to embrace cheerfully the responsibilities of adulthood and the obligation to serve others, so I changed my age in the poem to sixteen. Actually I was in my late twenties, living briefly with my father after my first marriage had failed and I was between jobs. Even when making ourselves look

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bad, we can still find a way to make ourselves look good. "Gilding our blemishes," I called it a few paragraphs ago, when I was scorning others for doing it.

6. Lies of extended consciousness. This mystical-sounding category covers two kinds of lies. One is the outright appropriation of other people's experiences. Theft. But it's not really theft, the thief protests. The story was just lying around and John Reese wasn't using it. He's in the Air Force now. What's he going to do with his story? Besides, I need it more than he does. I can put it to use. And in "The Benedictine Hand" I put to use my friend's story about his high-school biology teacher who, while showing the class how to insert a glass tube into a rubber stopper, slipped and jabbed the tube into her palm:

> "Now that's what you are not supposed to do,"
> she said. She held two frozen fingers up,
> as if to bless us. "I've cut the median nerve.
> This is what's called the Benedictine Hand.
> It's paralyzed." She flexed her thumb and last
> two fingers. The blessing fingers stayed erect.
> Then, pale, she wrapped her red hand in a wad
> of towels, left the room—quick, angry steps.

As I say, I didn't see this happen. My friend John Reese saw it, a boy who was enough like me, I'm tempted to argue, that it makes little essential difference that he saw it and I didn't. Not only could I have easily been the boy who saw his teacher ram a jagged glass tube into her palm, I know exactly which one of my own teachers would have done it and how she would have reacted. Since the day in the Huntingdon College dining room that John told me the story, Mrs. Houston has so many times in my imagination driven that tube into her palm and stood before the class with blood trickling down her left wrist and forearm that I can, only with great difficulty, remember that it's not a memory.

After *The Glass Hammer* was published, I called John and apologized for stealing his story. He didn't know what I was talking about. He'd forgotten. Which only proves that the story was more important to me than it was to him and thus rightly mine because I realized its true value. Is it really stealing, the thief asks, if the victim doesn't miss it when it's taken?

A more subtle, less clearly transgressive form of the lie of extended consciousness occurs when the writer applies knowledge he or she has as an adult to a childhood experience. That's what I do in "Fireflies After Twilight," in which I reflect on being a boy sleeping on a screened-in porch, watching fireflies till I fall asleep

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Rarely more
than one light quavered at a time,
flicking its diminishing sexual light
against the crowded pines. Eros
and Thanatos I'll call it now
but then I simply called it fear.
If I'm still frightened—and I am—
it's complicated with yearnings
toward doubleness and indecision:
how during sunlight I block light,
which warms my back and loosens me,
while after dark I stand out, white
against the black pines, usually
but not always at odds with nature,
God and the gods. . . .

I am almost as different from that child I once was as I am from John Reese. Just as I stole John's story, I am in this poem stealing a story from my young self and using it for my adult reflections—reflections that would baffle and annoy the ten- or twelve-year-old boy who lived the experience. Ten or twelve. See? I don't even know him well enough to know how old he is. The adult interprets that boy's life in ways the boy would not comprehend and would probably reject out of hand as making a big deal out of nothing.

And now we have already moved deeply into the next lie.

7. The lie of interpretation. The essential lie. When I was about three-quarters of the way through *The Glass Hammer*, I sent what I'd written so far to my editor, Peter Davison, a writer with a clear eye for writing and the ability to make himself excruciatingly clear even to those who have ears and cannot hear.

"The book doesn't go anywhere," he said.

"Yeah, I know. I don't want it to. If the book ended with a forced sense of reconciliation, it'd be a lie."

"I didn't say it should have a forced sense of reconciliation. I said it didn't go anywhere."

"Life doesn't go anywhere. That's the point."

"It's unsatisfying to read a book that just stops. As it is now, your manuscript just drops off the table. Think about how you'd feel if you were reading it."

And finally what friends had been trying to tell me for almost a year became crystal clear. My vow to write while I was still angry had brought me this far, but it was now making it impossible for me to end the book. "I was ticked off then and I'm still ticked off, but at least I can laugh about it" isn't much in the way of making one's life comprehensible to a reader. That's a truth I normally have a firm grasp on but

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that I'd let slip from my hands while grappling with the psychological complexities that got churned up when I tried to turn my own personal life into literary material.

Grudgingly, I went back to work, trying to make sense out of material—my life!—that I had resisted making sense out of because first I'd have to understand it, and that understanding could be tentative, provisional, and painful. Then I'd have to forgive it, which is painful. Then I'd have to ask for forgiveness, which is even more painful. Then I'd have to write it all down through many drafts, which means going through the whole ordeal over and over again. Aesthetics and psychology are uncomfortably interwoven, but in autobiography the warp and woof is pulled even tighter than in most fiction because the writer's own emotional, spiritual, and intellectual progress becomes the aesthetic progress of the book.

But was I wrong to resist meaning, resolution, closure? Interpretation *is* the lie of tendentiousness. We live our lives, most of us, ambivalent, full of unresolved emotions and guilts, unsure of where we're going and where we've been, and, more unnervingly, unsure of why we're where we are. But all that suspended feeling and thought, if it remains suspended, makes for an unsatisfying aesthetic experience. The problem boils down to this: life has no intrinsic meaning, while art has to have it. Or, at least significance. Or, if not significance, shape. The biographer is given a natural closure for his or her book—death. But the autobiographer, being alive, has to choose where to end. That act of choice, an aesthetic decision, then echoes throughout the rest of the book, modifying and shedding light and dark on all that has come before, more like the end of a novel than the end of a biography, more like the closing of a fictional world than the end of one life in the continuing flow of history.

The greatest poem about childhood is Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* a poem I hated from the moment I began reading it. I hated it not as a poem. As a poem, it's magnificent. I hated it as a romantic and romanticized view of childhood. Stephen Gill, in his fine biography of Wordsworth, returns time after time to Wordsworth's poetic account of his own childhood, pointing out where the poet is being interpretative—where he violates chronology, where he is evasive, and where it's impossible to discern if he's being literally accurate, as he shapes his story to demonstrate how nature was the dominant force in his childhood. Almost everything that does not support this thesis is swept away or suppressed.

Reading Gill on Wordsworth and *The Prelude,* I finally understood that I didn't hate the poem; I simply hated Wordsworth's interpretation of childhood, and I was not yet willing to grant him his interpreta-

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tion of his own childhood. My temperament is not romantic, and if I hated many Southern memoirs, no matter how well written, for their soft-focus sentimentality toward childhood, happy families, and the Fair Sex, I loved Maxim Gorky's *Childhood* and *Adolescence* for their harsh, gritty view of those same things. But Gorky lied, too. Interpreted. His grittiness is often in the service of his Marxism, as is Richard Wright's in *Black Boy*.

Not that Gorky's, Wright's, or Wordsworth's interpretations are necessarily wrong. It's just that they are interpretations, and thus, like most interpretations, exclusive. Like St. Augustine's interpretation of his life, Jonathan Edwards's of his, Rousseau's of his, and Benjamin Franklin's of his. And once we've posited a reading of our lives, we tend to look back and see how all roads could only have led us to the truth because it is the truth, and all roads could only have led us to where we are because here we are. A formulated interpretation tends to drive out other possibly valid interpretations and suppress ambivalence, ambiguity, and chance. But if having an interpretation presents aesthetic difficulties, not having one, as I finally came to see, presents more. Even worse than the over-determined, moralizing story is the story with no reflections, no point, no sense of progress—emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually. If we are listening to a story, there has to be a reason the story is being told and a reason we're listening.

My vow to stay angry was, of course, an interpretation, too, but the premature interpretation of a fifteen-year-old boy. And as I thought about it, I began to see why the memoirists that I'd been angry with, and contemptuous of, had striven so hard—often too hard—to forgive and be forgiven. The rage of a sullen and over-sensitive boy is unattractive but appropriate at fifteen; in the mouth of a forty-two-year-old man it's the immature product of a stunted personality. And I would have deprived my book of any forward movement at all if, out of fidelity to the vow of a fifteen-year-old boy, I had omitted the understanding I'd struggled to acquire over the intervening twenty-seven years. Still, I'm satisfied that some—enough—of my adolescent anger, confusion, and unhappiness came through in the finished book anyway. *The Glass Hammer* was recently included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's "list of recommended books for young readers" because it was "identified as having high appeal for teens, ages 12–18, who, for whatever reasons, do not like to read"—a mixed honor I'm still mulling over, pleasure wrestling with bafflement for the upper hand.

8. While interpretation lies by saying "It means this," impressionism lies by saying "It feels like this." Reading over my own book, I was surprised by how my childhood came across as very rural, very country.

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Because my father was a career military man, I lived in Texas, New Mexico, England, Ohio, North Carolina, California, and France before he was stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, where, as I mentioned, he retired and where I attended high school and college. But both my parents grew up in Griffin, Georgia, and when they could, they took me and my brothers back there to spend time in the country with my grandmother, aunts, and uncles, as well as first, second, and third cousins arrayed in gradations of kinship that I could never comprehend. Even more important than our visiting Griffin, though, is the way my parents carried rural Georgia with them wherever they went, and from them I absorbed country expressions, speech patterns, attitudes, beliefs, and habits of thought without even knowing I was absorbing them. The book may give an impression of a more rural childhood than the one I actually lived, but it does give a true reflection of one way I perceived my life, a true reflection of how large those visits to Georgia loomed in my memory and imagination.

I'm always astonished at how falsely I remember things, astonished at how plastic memory is. And even when I know a memory is incorrect, part of my brain cleaves to the wrong, imagined memory, and now I hold two images in my head, two memories—and the false one is more vivid and more emotionally significant to me than the actual one. Which, then, is the truest memory? It's convenient when the actual events adequately convey the emotional experience, but sometimes they don't and the writer has to choose. I acknowledge the dilemma in "In a Car Outside the Vineyard Baptist Church," a poem about my grandfather's funeral:

> A week from now I'd start
> to wonder where Da-daddy was. I'd ask.
> Momma would hug me, moan, try to explain.
> But in the hot car, now, her bright red lips
> churned wordlessly until they caught. She screamed.
> My father, cousins, kin all say I'm wrong.
> But that's how I remember it: she screamed.

While I wouldn't be so disingenuous as to argue that a false memory is valid simply because it is vivid, I would argue that there must be some subjective truth to it, some emotional truth—and that one reads an autobiography to see how the writer experienced and evaluates his or her life and a biography to find a more objective view. The lie of impressionism is the biggest lie, the least defensible logically, ethically, or morally; and it's inescapable for a writer attempting to create an artistically coherent work. Even appropriated memories, such as the one about the teacher who stuck the glass tube through

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her hand, have an emotional force for the person who needed to appropriate them, and if that force is strong enough, it's almost as misleading to omit them as it is to include them.

My argument grows strained and my tone shrill because I'm unhappy with the illogical, unethical, and immoral position that practical experience has led me to. But the trust I bring to reading an autobiography is a reader's trust in a convincingly told tale, not the trust I bring to reading the *New York Times* or a history of Assyria, in which aesthetics are secondary to factual accuracy. The autobiography dances on the shifting middle ground between fact and fiction, reportage and imagination, actuality and art; and different writers will draw their lines on that ground in different places. As an artist, a poet, I drew my line considerably further to the side of impressionism than a reporter or historian might have, or than I had meant to when I began the book.

Though the lies of interpretation and impressionism bother me, they are essential. We read memoirs precisely to find out what one writer thinks his life means and how that life felt to the one who lived it. As I look back over *The Glass Hammer,* I say, yes, that *is* what my childhood means, and, yes, that *is* how it felt. And, to make those two affirmations, I accept, however uneasily, the lies I had to tell.

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Bassoonist

(for C.)

ROBIN S. CHAPMAN

Holed up in mountains
She is starting to feel
Herself again, swimming
Miles every day,
Morning-practice, evening-practice
From audition lists,
Off caffeine for a steady hand,
Putting in the daily hour
Shaving reeds to fit
The altitude and temperature
Of place and score,
Working for years for the moment when—
Lips, reeds, pipe, fingers, breath—
She becomes
The perfect instrument,
Played through by
Lightning and thunderbolt,
Tremor and avalanche,
Shamble and growl
Of the bear in honey,
Rumble of the elk
In rutting season,
Modern music.

✪ ROBIN S. CHAPMAN is the author of two books of poetry, *Distance, Rate, Time,* and *Learning to Talk* (Fireweed Press). Her poems have appeared in *Poetry* and the *Hudson Review,* among other journals.

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Life with Father

MATTHEW STEVENSON

LIKE MANY WHO DRIVE CARS THE SIZE OF BREAD VANS, I looked up one Sunday at lunch to discover four children. From various facial resemblances, not to mention the names chalked into the rug, I knew these children to be mine. But such are the tricks of memory that in the instant I looked up, I had the illusion that all four had arrived that afternoon—perhaps on order from L. L. Bean—and that, when the meal began, my wife and I had had no children and had been contemplating a lazy afternoon reading books or getting ready to go to the movies.

Although the lunch was sandwiches, my wife and I had a glass of wine and hopes of turning the meal into one of those happy family gatherings recommended in *Parents* magazine, even if at such times, instead of discussing Greek history, we express astonishment about the stickers needed to fill a Barbie album.

No sooner were we settled at the table than there came forth the demand for "more juice" . . . "no, juice with water" . . . "no, Daddy, juice with warm water, and don't forget to dry off the top." Obedient busboys, we scurried to and from the kitchen until the thread of conversation was lost, the two older children had been excused, and the toddler, dressed as a cowboy, had filled his chaps.

Were I a with-it modern dad—the kind so often profiled in *Esquire*—I would have taken all this routine chaos in stride. I might even have changed the diaper without a death threat. I might have joined in the postprandial game of scattering the sofa cushions and pretending I was on Dr. Dolittle's ship to Africa where—as the rules in our family dictate—on arrival one succumbs to cholera. Instead I retreated to the cocoon of a nearby *International Herald Tribune*. When it came time to stand up and be counted for diaper changing, I was checking the standings in Japanese baseball. And when the ship mutinied over the issue of which captain would invite Curious George to the

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messroom, I was deep into an article about the Clintons' holiday in Grand Teton.

All this isn't to say that I put myself in the negligent-father category. I am happily married to my wife, the mother of all my children, I spend my weekends inhaling chlorine at indoor swimming pools, I roller blade to keep pace with training wheels, and, in heroic dad fashion, I sometimes remove dead birds from the driveway.

On the other hand, I do not work the cough-medicine night shift, clean the rabbits' cages, or tackle the finer points of toilet training. To use the analogy of professional football, which I have watched while childhood unfolds around me, I reluctantly see my position as that of a backup quarterback—pacing the sidelines with a clipboard or calling in a play from the press box or, more realistically, the office. On most downs, my wife takes the snaps from center, sending the children around end to school or marching the family downfield to IKEA

Something too close to home strikes a chord in *The New Yorker* cartoon that shows a light-footed executive coming through the front door, briefcase in hand, raincoat over his arm. His wife is waiting expectantly with two drinks in the living room, where, in the opposite corner, a baby is in a playpen. Smiling to his wife, the executive says: "Be there in a sec, darling. I just want to touch base with Tiffany."

Even when I trot onto the field as the backup quarterback, plays have a way of getting broken. One evening my wife badly sprained her ankle, and during the night, when one of the children was coughing, she asked if I could give the child a dose of cough medicine. Knocking about the bathroom in the stupor of an addict preparing a fix, I measured the dose, propped up my sleepy daughter, poured the syrup down, and went back to bed—feeling as virtuous as Clara Barton. In the morning, when my wife heard the dispatch from the front, she could only sigh: "You gave Helen the medicine? . . . but it was Laura who was coughing."

However harshly I might judge my performance on the playing fields of fatherhood, I have relished the role ever since my first Lamaze class. I continue to bore colleagues at work with stories of the children's witticisms. As the weekend impresario, I lead circus expeditions with the pride of General de Gaulle retaking Paris or swimming expeditions as if we were to cross the Channel and not simply the long hours of a Saturday afternoon. And I never miss the chance to tell any of their birth stories.

As a rule, fathers do not have the serial rights to childbirth stories. Mothers retain the copyright to these epics, which mostly are told during dinner parties, to other mothers, when

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the men excuse themselves to "check the score" in the 49ers game.

Our oldest daughter, who is now eight, was born in New York City, and as it now appears in memory, we started Lamaze childbirth classes several years before we decided to have children. Lamaze is, of course, the name of the doctor who championed more natural childbirth, including the participation of the father in the delivery. The class was held in a lounge at New York University Hospital, and by the second session the fathers who had not deserted their wives had at least abandoned the class.

I made it to the last class, which featured a visit to the hospital birthing room of John McEnroe and Tatum O'Neal and the Movie, the gynecological equivalent of those fatalistic films shown in high school driver's ed classes. Lamaze, the movie, ends with a birth, not a teenage road accident, but otherwise it features the same couple from the 1960s: he in a paisley shirt and bowl haircut; she looking and sounding like Janis Joplin, especially at the end.

Sadly, Buster Keaton never starred in a Lamaze movie. Ours featured this earnest young couple sharing the experience of labor. The with-it father-to-be leads his wife on tension-easing walks, packs the famed overnight bag, times contractions as if they were Olympic trials, and during the worst of labor, utters the psalm of all expectant fathers, "You're doing great, honey," which to a woman in transitional labor is as comforting as reading aloud a chapter from Joe Namath's memoirs.

Although I was a Lamaze graduate, during our first encounter with labor I was not able to time the contractions because at that moment someone decided to break into our house. We were living in Brooklyn, where burglaries are even more natural than childbirth, and when my wife awoke at 3:00 A.M. in labor, she heard someone moving about downstairs. She timed contractions while I looked for the intruder. Wanting to confront neither the burglar nor impending fatherhood, I drew on my Lamaze training to feed the cats and relock the back door. Finally, I loaded my wife into a friend's car for the trip into Manhattan, leaving the house to the mercy of burglars. In Brooklyn, you only call the police when the break-ins are five minutes apart.

At the hospital we were put in a labor room with what Monty Python in *The Meaning of Life* called "the machine that goes ping." A cross between a seismograph and a Wall Street ticker, it recorded the peaks and valleys of each contraction. I fed my wife ice chips and hoped that John Cleese wasn't the doctor on call.

Lamaze had prepped us to "just say no" to painkilling drugs. When the doctor arrived and said that my wife had "that epidural look in her eye," I gave a speech that sounded like the text of a Nancy Reagan

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address to Young Republican mothers. The doctor cut me off to say that Lamaze was there to get us to the hospital, as if it were a New York car service. Soon the room filled up with cheerful anesthesiologists from the Indian subcontinent who connected the epidural as if they were stringing up Christmas lights at an office party.

When the dripping painkiller took effect, the birth passed into the eye of the hurricane. My wife stopped shaking. I could massage the fingernail marks in my arm. As it was no longer necessary to comfort my wife with stories of Joe Namath at the Orange Bowl, the doctor and I could spend the next hour, before the final pushing, discussing the effects of higher interest rates on her real estate portfolio. No longer was I Joseph at the manger. Now I was at a funky Soho cocktail party where one of the guests had decided to give birth.

I credit Mick Jagger with getting me through the birth of our second child. When it came time to renew our Lamaze vows, the coach waived the requirement of the breathing exercises and put us through a one-session refresher course that was taught by an obstetrical nurse who, for her fifteen minutes of fame, had delivered one of the children of Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall.

After the nurse checked our breathing skills and reminded us of the essentials, such as how to find hospital parking, she settled into a two-hour description of the Jagger-Hall nativity. As might be expected of the lyricist of "Mother's Little Helper," Mick failed to grasp some Lamaze principles and passed the birth of his child at the side of his bodyguards, who were breathing in hamburgers at a neighborhood tavern. Obviously something had gone wrong in his childbirth class, and *This Is Spinal Tap* was the feature film.

With such a precedent, it did not surprise me that, close to my wife's due date, I accepted an invitation from a customer to attend a Rolling Stones concert at Shea Stadium. "Forty-year-old guys dancing to fifty-year-old guys," is how my friend, Tom Leonard, describes the modern Stones' concerts, although in this case we mixed in some thirty-year-old secretaries from Australia, as our host was a Sydney bank. Sensitive to the needs of my wife, I called home from the skybox several times, even leaving the line open during "Jumpin' Jack Flash" so that we could share the experience.

The next afternoon, while I was humming "Satisfaction" at my desk, my wife sensed the early stages of labor. She was in Manhattan, about a mile from the hospital, actually leaving the doctor's office. But a nesting instinct put her on the subway home to Brooklyn, where I arrived breathlessly an hour later. We timed contractions, talked with the doctor, and decided it was better to be early

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at the hospital than to have a baby born out of gridlock.

The attending physician deduced that it might be a false alarm and made us wait in a room better suited to Argentine police interrogations. As there was little labor, the machine hardly went ping. After fifteen minutes, an intern came in to ask some questions for the admitting forms.

"Have you ever had malaria . . . rheumatic fever . . . small pox . . . jaundice?" went her questions. "Rubella, scarlet fever . . . mumps . . . heart disease . . . ?" The intern looked the age of Doogie Howser and read the list of questions with a tone of nervous embarrassment, as if maybe this was all part of a high school prank.

We were working our way through, "kidney stones . . . anthrax . . . cholera . . . ?" when labor hit with the sudden force of a California earthquake. Tremor after tremor washed through the dim room. At each contraction, I would hold my wife while the intern would pause, politely standing aside until the destruction of Los Angeles was complete. Once the contraction subsided, the list would continue: "asthma . . . rickets . . . neuritis . . . ?" Maybe Buster Keaton had made that Lamaze film after all.

Finally, I interrupted her. "Maybe you should try to find a doctor?" I suggested.

The doctor who arrived was also a young woman, wearing an embroidered sweater and Top-Siders, who looked as if she had opened the wrong door and instead of finding the skybox at Shea Stadium, had walked in on a birth. To her astonishment, she discovered the breached head of the baby. We each grabbed one end of the rolling bed on which my wife lay and rocked our way to a delivery room. The doctor scrubbed frantically. Nurses prepared the bedside. I put on the surgical whites of the standard attending-dad uniform. Within minutes, our second daughter was born, as the Stones might say, under my thumb.

Our third child, a son, was born in Maine, for the same price as the epidural in New York. By that time we were living abroad in Switzerland, but decided to return to the States for the birth, an even longer drive than that from Brooklyn to Manhattan.

Swiss hospitals assume all patients to be related to the Shah of Iran. Routinely a woman delivering a baby spends ten days in a clinic overlooking Lake Geneva, where she learns to grapple with her new responsibilities over pedicures and Bordeaux wines. But as our son's birth in August was coinciding with a wedding and my wife's summer trip with the children to visit our families in the United States, we gambled that I would arrive in time from Europe to get my wife to the

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hospital. I was sure that at least Mick would feel that time was on my side.

Two days before the due date, which is rarely accurate, I flew from Geneva to Frankfurt, then to Boston, and finally to Bangor, Maine, a trip that started out feeling like the Orient Express and ended as if on Greyhound. The next evening we ate lobster and drank French champagne—births need to be celebrated ahead of time if the mother is to enjoy the party. That night, in the dark hours before dawn, a bat flew into our room about the same time that my wife went into labor. Numb with jet lag, I woke up feeling as if Goya had scripted the Lamaze film and chosen Alfred Hitchcock as the director.

At 4:00 A.M. we backed out of the driveway and set off for the hospital through pine forests and fields edged with stone walls. As experienced Lamaze parents, instead of timing contractions, we argued about names and whether there was time for me to stop at Dunkin' Donuts for coffee. We finally agreed on the names but not the coffee stop and thus, uninterrupted, checked into the hospital by telling the nurse at reception my wife's first name. In New York, before one birth, I was told at the admitting desk to come across with $12,000 in cash, until an insurance voucher was found.

The delivery room overlooked the Penobscot River and the first flickering rays of the sun to touch the United States. It felt like a camping trip, not the Fawlty Towers of New York University Hospital. The attending nurse was named Bunny, and she changed sheets, heated blankets, and comforted my wife with Maine chatter ("Don't worry, honey, I ain't goin' to frig with you") while the obstetrician settled into a chair at the end of the bed with his mail and what I think was a fishing magazine. This episode of Lamaze featured 4077 MASH's Colonel Henry Blake practicing fly casting before surgery.

At the last possible moment, or perhaps at the end of an article on trout, the doctor waded into the white water of birth and pulled in the catch, who was squirming and flipping about at the shock of his new life on land.

Why would anyone have a fourth child in an age in which the World Population Organization recommends quitting after 2.3 have been born? It was a question we asked ourselves. Against the fourth was all the rigamarole of a baby—the diaper bag that never leaves your side, the feedings at 2:30 A.M., the anxiety of pregnancy and the fear of birth defects, not to mention the projected cost of a college education in twenty years, which, as my father likes to remind us, will be the same as Ghana's gross national product.

What pushed us toward the fourth—aside from wanting another

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child and, more important, having room in the bread van—was the closed shop of a three-child family. Although they meant no lasting harm, the two older girls treated their younger brother as if he were always trying to cross a picket line. On most days he would wake up with the dream of acquiring a union card and playing in their imaginary games or with their boxes of toys. Inevitably, a union heavy would suggest that playing with those Barbies "wasn't such a good idea." His first words were "No, Henry," chanted even to himself when the little teamsters were off at school.

When the die were cast, we decided to have the baby in a Swiss hospital. This time there was no social occasion to call us back to America, and we had exchanged our American health insurance for Swiss coverage. We also wanted a chance to try some of the recent white burgundies.

My wife selected a local doctor on the sound medical grounds that her office had unlimited parking. Wanting to meet the new doctor before the big event, I tagged along to one of the appointments to review the results of a sonogram. With the assurance of a briefing officer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the doctor picked out lungs, fingers, and backbone on the negatives, while all I saw was the silhouette of a tiny astronaut and the shadowy confines of the mother ship.

During the last months of the pregnancy, I kept nagging my wife about the lack of a Lamaze refresher course. My claim had a long list of particulars: I had forgotten the breathing exercises; I didn't know if anyone in Switzerland had even heard of Joe Namath; lastly, I had no idea where to park. My case, however, was dismissed on the grounds that I was an experienced father and that, with a fourth baby due, all we needed to know was how to get to the hospital on time.

When my wife went into labor, it was a Sunday evening in November, and, just to make things interesting, I was at the office. I wasn't shirking responsibilities so much as joining the chairman of our bank for a meeting with out-of-town guests. When I called home during a lull in the flip charts, she suggested I skip the business dinner, which is how a woman from Maine says "It's time."

I have always enjoyed the drive to the hospital. For the other births we drove at a safe parental speed through the back streets of Brooklyn—slow enough for me to time contractions and point out such landmarks as the storefront of the Reverend Al Sharpton's hair impresario. But this evening, playing with the fire of a fourth baby, we were roaring through the small farming villages that surround Geneva at chicken-scattering speeds, which went against my view that the official film for transport to the maternity hospital

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should be *Driving Miss Daisy* instead of *The French Connection.*

It was Sunday night, and the hospital was a ghost town, at least figuratively, save for one unlucky wraith who sat behind a desk in the emergency room. By now we were running, the bag was waving around like a flag, and when I shouted "Maternité!" to the night man, I'm sure he thought I was shouting "Fraternité!" as if this Lamaze film featured a storming of the Bastille.

Had we been refreshed with Lamaze, we would have known that the delivery rooms were on the third floor. Instead we rushed headlong down empty corridors that now echoed the accented French of two Americans hoping to deliver a baby on the other side of the ramparts. A heroine of the revolution, dressed in a nurse's gown, rescued us from our labyrinth of panic and led us to the tranquility of the *salle accouchement.* In New York the delivery room always looked like Kojak's office, but here there was a bed by a large picture window, a view of the mountains, subdued lighting, interesting art, and a jacuzzi suitable for Plato's Retreat. It made me wonder: if this is a delivery room, what do the rooms look like in the fertility clinic?

Before we could have the baby—this was Switzerland, after all—we had to produce our passports and work permits, and various insurance vouchers, much as if we were on vacation with a package tour. And with labor in full force, a nurse started asking my wife for her medical history ("Here we go again, *encore,*" as Yogi Berra might have quipped in French).

Not being a licensed obstetrician, our doctor brought with her a card-carrying specialist—the kind whose rates usually include valet parking. His arrival in the delivery room reminded me of the way late-inning relief pitchers hop the fence of the bullpen and walk slowly to the mound. As the room filled up with doctors, nurses, and a midwife, for what was clearly going to be a rapid delivery, I tried to console my wife with a damp washcloth and anecdotes from Super Bowl III. Thirty-five minutes after parking the car, our fourth child and second son was born.

With newborn babies my wife is the head coach and general manager. Occasionally she sends me in from the bench to go off-tackle with a diaper or to pick up the blitz that is the nightly bath. But mostly I'm a man in motion, backing the car out of the driveway or folding the stroller into the trunk.

The job I take seriously, however, is reading bedtime stories. Even on nights when I am diverted to a business dinner, I try to dart home to read, for example, *It Happened in Pinsk* ("Ah, Pinsk, could there be a lovelier city?") or to make way for ducklings on their ramble through Beacon Hill.

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Even with squirming toddlers, I have spent countless hours wondering if Spot is under the stairs or in the piano (he's in the basket), although my favorite first book is *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, the story of a small rabbit saying goodnight, with the melodious harmony of Ogden Nash, to the things in his room:

Goodnight comb
And goodnight brush

Goodnight nobody
Goodnight mush

Who can tire of Dr. Seuss?

Sometimes
I feel quite CERTAIN
there's a JERTAIN
in the CURTAIN

but the same is also true of anything by James Marshall (*Miss Nelson Is Missing*) or Arnold Lobel, the author and illustrator of nature's odd couple, Frog and Toad.

Mostly my reading list for the children is stuck in *The New Yorker* magazine, from the era that precedes S. I. Newhouse and his editors' weakness for words and images not suitable for children. We have, for example, a near-complete collection of the books of William Steig, whose illustrated classics are also a reason to have a fourth baby.

Steig is the cartoonist of such emotions as Greed or Folly with near-pointilist caricature. But to me he is the genius of *Rotten Island* ("They loved their rotten life. They loved hating and hissing . . . screaming, roaring, caterwauling . . . Rotten Island was their Paradise"); *Doctor De Soto*, a mouse of a dentist who outwits a fox ("The fox, still woozy, said goodbye and left. On his way home, he wondered if it would be shabby of him to eat the De Sotos when the job was done."); *Amos and Boris*, the friendship at sea of a mouse and a whale ("They knew they might never meet again. They knew they would never forget each other."); *Dominic*, a beagle errant who bests the Doomsday Gang (" . . . four foxes, three weasels, eight ferrets, a wildcat, a wolf, six tomcats, two dingoes, and a parcel of rats. . ."); and *Brave Irene*, Mrs. Bobbin's daughter, who delivers the duchess her ballgown through a blizzard. ("The wind wrestled her for the package—walloped it, twisted it, shook it, snatched at it. But Irene would not yield. 'It's my mother's work!' she screamed.")

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Steig uses mice, whales, foxes and wandering beagles the way Chekhov does overcoats and bus rides—to illustrate cowardice, love, jealousy, and temptation. And not the least of Steig's virtues is that his books can be read quickly in that low moment between a late homecoming and dinner from the microwave oven.

On many evenings, after I give up, our kids fall asleep listening to E. B. White reading on tape *Charlotte's Web* or *The Trumpet of the Swan.* I had never heard White's resonant, New York voice until my friend Bill Rodgers mailed us the tapes. I find it a magical connection across place and time that my daughters can go to sleep in bedrooms that overlook the Swiss alps and listen to White tell the story of a pig and a spider at a New England county fair. He starts with these words: "This is the story of the barn. I wrote it for children and to amuse myself. It is called *Charlotte's Web,* and I will read it to you."

When I was a magazine editor, and before I had children, I edited an article by Alison Lurie that made the point that "the lasting works of juvenile literature are thoroughly subversive" and that children prefer books, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or *Peter Pan,* that deflate the pretentions of the bourgeois world. I admire Ms. Lurie's essay, and often try to apply her thesis as I make my way with the kids through *The BFG* or *Black Beauty.* Unfortunately, I think it better explains why adults love children's books. Children, I've noticed, just like hearing the sound of their parents' voices.

Like other parents of small children, I find myself at the headwaters of a slow-moving river of gifts. I tend toward earnest presents: picture books about Burma or folk art from Russia, although what the children love most is shampoo from hotel bathrooms or toothbrushes from airplanes. Around Christmas, my wife and I—even in Switzerland—stroll the aisles of Toys R Us, pushing a flatbed truck.

Nevertheless, everyone has limits with his indulgence, and I have drawn mine offshore, near the consumer mooring of Barbie's boat. In the time between my younger sister's collection and the birth of our daughters, Barbie cashed in stock options and acquired a yacht. Roughly the size of PT 109, and just as easy to cut in half, the boat makes every list for Christmas and birthdays. Neighborhood children who have it are held up as examples of happiness and objects of parental devotion.

The sell is in the box, which depicts Barbie and her friends in midcruise, probably somewhere near Bimini. Ken's expression hasn't changed since 1966, and here he appears on deck, dressed in a white suit with a gold anchor chain, raising the possibility of an Elvis sighting on board. Barbie, with that dental hygenist's smile, has cruise wear

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suitable for a czarina. Together on the yacht they look like friends of the British duchess Sarah Ferguson, who once out of camera range are capable of compromising each other's toes.

Although we have managed to keep the yacht in drydock, we have started on The American Girls Collection of dolls, which are only slightly cheaper than adopting babies in Romania. Each doll comes with a six-volume history of trial and tribulation in American mythology—one girl escapes from slavery; another emigrates from Sweden to the great plains—and the idea is to hook parents on the books and little girls on the accessories and outfits, which in price and variety conjure images of Ivana Trump on the Underground Railroad.

When I learned the price of the American dolls, at the time of the first pleas, I lowered my voice to Ward Cleaver tones and announced that the girls, then ages six and four, would have to earn money to help pay for them. A lemonade outlet was decided upon, and shortly thereafter the first franchise opened on a rocky Maine beach where the water is usually the temperature of German beer and sunbathers arrive in sweatshirts. I provided the working capital—for ice, cups, and raw materials—and the price list was established on cardboard taped to an ancient folding table.

Our daughters, who can be shy with grandparents for the first half hour, took to sales with the enthusiasm of Fran Tarkenton on cable television. Immediately they started using phrases like: "I'll collect from that one," and "Get those two guys on the motorcycle." I thought I was teaching the values of thrift and hard work. Instead I had created The Force, which devoted the rest of the vacation to reviewing product lines and cutting jackpots.

A lot of being a father reduces to what Juvenal called bread and circuses. During the week I'm at the office, spinning memos into gold. But come the weekends, almost like a mythical divorced father, I lead skating parties, coach bike riding, and set strategy to visit snake vivariums.

Most decisions about children's entertainment, be they afternoon excursions or, for us, summer trips to America, can be filed under the notion of trying to do the right thing. Although most days the children are content to play with the sofa cushions or mix poison in the bathtub, we walk them through museums, cram them onto airplanes, and rent hotel rooms for them in strange cities.

In a moment of weakness, we also decided to take them to the mountains. The idea behind renting an apartment in the Swiss alps was to escape Geneva's winter fog and expose the children to clear air and the delights of skiing. In hindsight, what we showed them is

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that their parents would only survive Outward Bound if they were dropped in Central Park, preferably not far from a delicatessen.

For the five winters preceding our rental, the alps had had little snow. Neighbors talked of global warming, and how there was more snow when they were children. We set off on Christmas afternoon, expecting to find brown slopes and idle ski lifts. As we had decided to stay through New Year's Day, the girls filled the car with their Christmas presents. Because no one could be found to feed either the cat or the rabbits, they were also packed into the car. Food stores were laid in, as were enough Barbie outfits to amuse Princess Diana.

Halfway to the village in the alps above Montreux, we began to think we might find snow at higher altitudes. But when we arrived in the town, we found four feet of new snow, and the road to our chalet impassable. Having dieted on stories of the greenhouse effect, we had neglected to purchase either snow tires or chains, and thus we had to abandon the car in the village and hike the last kilometer to the chalet.

Over the next three hours, with darkness falling and snow swirling, I dragged a small sled between the car and the chalet, hauling stuffed animals, bottles of wine, puzzles, and kitty litter. Thrashing about in snow drifts on Christmas Day, I felt like the only member of the Donner party who was traveling with dwarf rabbits.

For the next week of vacation, the snow came down sideways, I tried to buy chains for the car, and the children huddled inside the chalet, as if they were in the federal witness protection program. No amount of coaxing could convince them, at least for long, of winter's magic. Meanwhile I searched for chains and, when needing exercise, shoveled the car out of snow drifts.

The last two days of the holiday were spent reloading the car for the trip home. The children huddled in the safe house while I played Sherpa with sacks of new games and the cat carrier. The car was parked near the chalet on a lonely alpine road. All around were the snowy spires of mountain peaks. On the last trip to the car, I dragged the rabbits in their cage as if part of a sled race in Alice's Wonderland. When I got to the car, I found a Swiss policeman writing out a parking ticket. On a remote road in an empty countryside, he said I was in a No Parking zone, as though I were loading skis in front of the Capitol.

All French deserts me when I'm angry, so I reverted to being a mad Brooklynite and demanded to know the policeman's badge number. Puzzled with the request in a town of 250, which has one policeman, he gave me his name, his rank (chief of police), and the ticket, and then carefully and slowly backed away from the raving New Yorker who had come to the alps with his rabbits.

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If there is anything bittersweet about having children, aside from emotional meltdowns in supermarkets, it is knowing that one day, sooner than we think, the house will begin to empty with the same tidal swings that now have it filling up.

Some evenings we read *Rascal*, Sterling North's memoir of raising a raccoon in the Wisconsin woods. After a year with Rascal, the twelve-year-old Sterling must let his pet answer the call of the wild, and he packs Rascal in his canoe for the short trip to freedom. I know that one day, like frisky raccoons, my children will want to be taken to the far end of the lake and set free, as North writes of his last trip with Rascal, "straining to see through the moonlight and shadow, sniffing the air, and asking questions." He ends the book with words that can mist my eyes:

> I left the pecans on a stump near the waterline hoping Rascal would find them. And I paddled swiftly and desperately away from the place where we had parted.

Whether it comes in front of a freshman dorm or the Gare Cornavin in Geneva, I do not look forward to telling my own raccoons, "Do as you please. . . . It's your life." For now, maybe until they are teenagers, I prefer to keep my raccoons closer to home.

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Manqué

MICHAEL MOTT

In fact, in fiction, in a dream Napoleon
wept over *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
while half his army drowned in the Berézina.

It is an imperial right to surrender
to the beck and call of authors.
How many suicides were there when Goethe
put his puppet to bed with Lotte's bullet
and walked away no sufferer from fame,
Sturm und drang abetted in one breast
the world not much worse, and Weimar
put on the map, that pocket Versailles?

Given a chance, we all like to weep
for something other than ourselves, and
better to read *Hamlet* than make a decision
about who dies and who goes home
after the theater. If someone else weeps
beside us while we are reading and because
we are reading, because we want our emotions
handled artfully, in the hands of an artist,
this sadly inartistic someone is only a distraction
that fails to distract from our chosen distraction.

We can, after all, pick up real life any time.
Heaven knows, it is always there. But a book
needs to go back on the shelf, to a library,
out of our hands. . . . To return to Napoleon, who was,
probably, no better or worse for Werther, only
a man who had tried to write one novel and failed
and moved on to other ambitions, to the drowning of armies;
and Goebbels the poet manqué, or Hitler the washed-up painter.

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LETTER FROM RUSSIA

Following Dreiser, Seventy Years Later

THOMAS P. RIGGIO

In early September of 1995 I arrived in Moscow. I was feeling lucky, in large part because my trip was being underwritten by a generous grant. My research project was an edition of a diary kept by Theodore Dreiser in the late 1920s during his three months' stay in the former Soviet Union. The diary includes, among other things, a record of Dreiser's interviews with such historic figures as Nickolai Bukharin, Sergey Eisenstein, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Archbishop Platon, Karl Radek, and Konstantin Stanislavsky. The publication of these conversations, along with the novelist's impressions of life under the ten-year-old regime, interested a committee of Soviet specialists enough to approve my grant application. Enough, that is, to take a chance on a teacher of literature who had never been to Russia and whose command of the language just about enabled him to ask for help in five different states of emergency.

Skimming tourist books on the flight over, it struck me that I had come to know more about the country Dreiser had seen than the Russia of today. I was aware, of course, of the recent collapse of the Evil Empire and the glories of glasnost, and I knew that I was about to enter a country led by an ailing and habitually tipsy Boris Yeltsin, a bear of a man who had won a war with Mikhail Gorbachev but had seemed close to losing every battle since.

Although the question of leadership was just as uncertain in 1927, the year of Dreiser's visit, Russians then appeared to be more hopeful about their future. They had decided, in fact, to throw a big party, and they invited some fifteen hundred international celebrities to Moscow for a weeklong observance of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Among the Americans who came were a few die-hard Russophiles, such as the socialist writers Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman, and the journalist Anna Louise Strong—but also others, among them Sinclair Lewis and his future wife Dorothy Thompson, who were anything but political radicals.

At the time, most Americans felt little of the excitement over the revolution that, a decade before, had inspired John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* and led Lincoln Steffens to declare, "I have seen the future and it works." Early hopes for a new political mecca at Moscow had been clouded over by the World War; and the red scare in the United States further polarized Americans. Moreover, the Bolshevik heroes of 1917 seemed all too human after the ravages of the Civil War. And in the mid-twenties the Soviet adoption of the New Economic Policy appeared to many observers, including Dreiser, as a shift from democratic socialism to something closer to American capitalism.

In 1927, the fifty-six-year-old Dreiser was the most famous American to be invited to Moscow. He was considered the unofficial dean of American novelists, and so when he requested that the government extend the invitation and finance a longer tour of the country for him, he was quickly obliged. He wanted, he told the Russian representative in New York, "to see the real, unofficial Russia—the famine district in the Volga, say." The request seems not to have fazed the envoy. Dreiser was clearly a useful commodity to a government that understood the value—and vanity—of

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artists and intellectuals. "The Soviet believes you to be the outstanding literary intelligence of America," he was informed, and preparations were swiftly made for his journey.

Dreiser spent a good deal of time in Moscow and Leningrad, but he also traveled extensively throughout Georgia, the Ukraine, and along the port cities of the Black Sea. I could not follow his trail outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, I was told, because of the dangers for Americans in the present political climate. Even for those cities, State Department briefs suggested third-world health conditions combined with South Los Angeles–style urban violence. A friend, a historian who travels yearly to Russia, suggested I follow his example and buy a Mace device for protection. Having survived, and even flourished, growing up in New York's East Harlem, I took the health advisories more seriously, skipped the Mace gun, and had myself innoculated against the multitude of germs known to modern medicine.

Dreiser's preparations were simpler. He began by hiring a secretary, Ruth Kennell, a thirty-four-year-old American expatriate who had been living in Moscow and supporting herself by translating American literary texts for the state publishing house, Gosizdat. Kennell accompanied the man she called her "boss" everywhere, taking shorthand notes of his reactions and discussions, and each evening reorganizing her notes in the form of a typed diary. She would then hand over the typescript to Dreiser, who would cut and paste together various portions of it and add his own thoughts in longhand.

Having worked with this document for over a year, I had a hunch that there was a story behind its story. The fabled Russian archives were now open to Westerners, and I figured that if Norman Mailer was able to find so much in the KGB files about the sojourn in Minsk of the then unknown Lee Harvey Oswald, there was a betting chance that something on Dreiser was buried in old government records.

How to gain access to the records was my main concern. I began by arranging to live in Moscow with the family of a Russian exchange student whom I had met in Connecticut and who had agreed to be my guide. Her parents, both of whom spoke English, were scientists with international reputations; her mother had recently published a book in English and lectured the previous summer at Brown University and the University of Tennessee.

I was met at the airport by my guide, Irena. At age nineteen, she had already published articles on Russian operatic history and was collecting material to write the first comprehensive study of the subject for non-Russians. Practical as well as studious, she vetoed the idea of paying a taxi driver sixty dollars when we could get to her home by bus and subway for less than one dollar. It took a little over an hour to get to her parents' apartment, which was in a six-story building in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood near the Moscow State University.

We were met in the hallway by a heavyset young man who eyed me and my luggage with the hauteur of someone who could detain me and them if he so desired. After an animated exchange with Irena, he motioned me to go ahead, then followed us to the third-floor apartment and waited until I was let in. I assumed that he was an overzealous concierge with too little to report to management. The subject faded over introductions, but during my first Russian home-cooked meal, I was informed that this fellow was part of a crew of personal guards hired by the Georgians (a term, I soon learned, that was synonymous in these parts with "mafia thugs") who had bought and totally renovated the apartments on the first two floors. I did not know then that tales of the infamous, dark-complexioned Georgians would be a constant motif throughout my stay.

The Georgians were part of a larger problem for Irena's parents. Under the Soviets, my hosts had been given their apartment, a four-room arrangement that in a comparable area in America, say, midtown Manhattan, would have commanded a large sum. Although the government no longer provides such subsidies, it allows former occupants to keep their apartments and even to sell them. But now that such places command the huge sum—by native standards—of one hundred thousand dollars in hard (that is, foreign) currency, they were being bought by the few people with this kind of money. In transactions like this, the so-called nouveaux Russians mingled mysteriously in the minds of my hosts with mafia kingpins. Together, I was instructed, they controlled much of the free market as

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well as an equally large part of the government. I never did find out whether this was the truth of the matter or a personal matter of guilt by association with the nouveaux Georgian Russians who controlled the first two floors of their building.

In any case, I was unprepared for this version of local politics. The fact is that, while I was interested in the lurid talk of Georgians and corrupt new Russians, it all slipped quickly out of mind as the subject changed to what archive I would visit the next day.

II

Had I gone alone to the State Archives of the Russian Federation, I would now be writing about my first and only encounter with the legendary Russian bureaucracy. Since no one at the main office admitted to speaking English, I took a back seat to Irena, who explained my needs and tried to retrieve the letters of introduction I had already sent. No record of any such papers could be found. An hour later we were allowed to enter, thanks to my bullheaded guide, who debated the matter and remained stalwartly at the front window until an archivist appeared to assist us. She was a slight young woman with thick-lensed glasses who spoke in a whisper, as if in a holy place. Her stylishly coiffured hair and plain suit dress reminded me of those my mother and aunts wore on Sunday afternoons in the mid-fifties.

Our sedate archivist turned out to have the quickness of a roadrunner. We followed her up six flights of stairs, across a long hall, then back down the rear of the building, and out onto a back court filled with potholes and abandoned construction sites. We entered another building, stopping this time on the third floor. I was asked to sit in a drab little room that contained two chairs and a dilapidated wooden desk placed under an uncovered lightbulb that hung starkly from the ceiling. The walls, like those in the unlit hallway, were unicolor—a dull white, offset only by thickly layered dark khaki trim.

I had brought small boxes of candy as gifts for occasions like this. Before I could get the sweets out of my book bag, however, our attendant was gone with Irena to check the card catalog. I was left alone to wonder what confluence of fates brought me to this place. I opened one of the boxes and went straight for the comforts of the chewy chocolate caramels.

Fifteen minutes later I was presented with a stack of files that looked like scrapbooks with assorted papers clipped or pasted onto the pages. Clearly, the bookkeeping system was not state-of-the-art. Irena had found references to Dreiser in the catalog but no description of what was included under his name. Our archivist was equally puzzled as to the location of any documents relating to tenth anniversary celebrations. She decided that records labeled "foreign visitors" offered the best chance of finding anything on the subject. She placed the long books on the desk, selected one piece of chocolate from the open box, and wished me well. *Something* about Dreiser, she assured me, was to be found in these volumes, since the catalog indicated as much.

I started to turn pages filled with newspaper clippings, letters, and official programs relating to international luminaries of the 1920s. I recognized some names—Henri Barbusse, Diego Rivera, Lion Feuchtwanger—which followed each other in no discernable order. After a half hour of browsing, I saw a newspaper article that featured Dreiser. This was followed by letters of Russian officials who had traveled with him. Many commented on his actions and private statements, thereby offering a valuable source to cross-check the story he told in the diary. Irena translated them as I cheerfully took notes.

I had hoped to find letters of this kind, but I was not ready for one startling discovery: Ruth Kennell had leaked the diary she typed for Dreiser to agents of VOKS (the Soviet state department that dealt with foreign travelers). I stared in disbelief at a carbon copy of the diary as it had come from Kennell's typewriter, the same pages she had presented to Dreiser every evening for editing. The letters in the file from Kennell to Russian officials make it clear that her conduct was an act of self-protection. Working for a famous fellow American, she felt the need to prove her loyalty to her superiors. She must have suspected what the letters in the archive confirm: VOKS was getting reports about Dreiser's unorthodox views of the country from its appointed guides; and she, too, was being watched.

The existence of this copy of the diary helped to solve a major crux in Dreiser's story:

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the unexpected trouble he had in obtaining an exit visa at Odessa and the official insistence that he could not leave the country with private manuscripts. Since the Soviets knew, I now realized, that Dreiser had not written the most flattering account of them in his diary, there is a good chance that the harassment he experienced at the border was an attempt to confiscate the text.

I returned to the apartment that evening with a bundle of notes and a feeling that if I discovered nothing else about Dreiser's stay in Russia, I would go home a happy man.

Good fortune energized me. After only a day's rest, I unconscionably convinced Irena to travel to a suburb of Moscow to visit the Russian State Archives of Film and Photo Documents, a treasure-house of visual records that span modern Russian history. After taking the subway, a bus, and a taxi, we arrived at the archives. We entered a brick building that had at its center a spiraling staircase surrounded by walls covered with big blowups of old photographs. The majority of these are scenes from the last World War. These ghastly images from what Stalin called the "Second Great Patriotic War" were largely of the Nazi invasion of Russia and the vast destruction and pillage that followed in its wake. Devastated cityscapes alternated with even more painful portraits of human suffering. I suspect that these scenes are among the defining moments for the older generation that now feels so alienated from the values of the new Russia.

At the main office I stated my business. There was no catalog entry under the "Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution," so I asked to see photographs of the 1927–1928 period. Out came shoe boxes (this is not a metaphor), which held three-by-five index cards on which photographs were identified, usually in Russian script. They were worn and faded enough to appear themselves to have gone through the revolution. Thinking my luck had finally run out, I managed a faint smile and a *spassíba* ("thank you") when the boxes were set before me.

Fortunately, on the back of each card was a miniature snapshot of the original. With Irena's help, I was able to find photographs of the 1927 celebration in Red Square that matched Dreiser's word pictures in the diary. I also found a photograph of Dreiser made during his stay, in the form of a postcard, which served as propaganda for the government. On it is a quotation in Russian from Dreiser, stating his most positive views of the Soviet experiment.

Within five work days I received first-rate reproductions of photographs that will illustrate the book I am editing. Cost was a factor. A native can purchase copies at three dollars each; a foreigner pays thirty dollars a print. I never did get used to this scale, which holds true for many of the finer things of life in Russia: visits to museums and famous churches, theater tickets, travel by train, and hotel accommodations. Restaurants do not discriminate, since only a few wealthy Russians can afford them. Irena, for example, had never been to a restaurant in Russia. The price of a meal, with domestic wine, is the same as in good American restaurants—and higher at first-class hotels. Since even most professionals such as doctors and lawyers can't afford these prices (a full professor's salary is somewhere between seventy and one hundred dollars a month), only well-heeled tourists and affluent Russians dine out.

The expense of the photographs did not lower my spirits. I again returned to the apartment on Prospekt Vernadskogo with good news to share with my hosts, who, it later occurred to me, listened without complaint to more about Dreiser and the tenth anniversary than they needed to hear.

III

The pick and shovel work of verifying diary references required me to leave the archives and follow Dreiser's path through Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Historical detective work has its small rewards. There is the pleasure of correcting the record, even in such minor instances as Dreiser's erroneous placement of the "Cathedral of Our Savior—on the Moscow River." (The church stands beside the Yauza, a large tributary of the Moscow.) On occasion one gets beyond mere facts. Visiting the cemetery of the Novodevichy Convent altered my view of a poignant moment in the diary, Dreiser's words of homage at Chekhov's tomb. He broods at length on the Russian writer's burial place, which he decries as an unfitting, lonely site among the graves of the unknown. Walking through the cemetery, I realized that it

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had long been a special preserve for Russia's famous men and women. Dreiser either deliberately obscured this point or he had no idea where he was. The latter is unlikely, given the presence of his knowledgeable secretary. In this case, therefore, getting the facts straight gave me a better understanding of Dreiser's state of mind—particularly his inclination to ponder the vanity of human efforts (especially artistic efforts). Incidentally, the afternoon at the cemetery moved me as much as it had Dreiser: I got to see Chekhov's grave and also the beautifully sculptured monuments of some of my other heroes, not least of whom is the great basso Fyodor Chaliapin.

Information of this sort gets stored in the notes of an edition. Other events provide a different sort of education. There are wonderful memories of Russian culture—modern dance at the Bolshoi, the exhibit of the landscapes of Ayvazovski, the Moscow Circus.

And then there are experiences not listed in tourist books. For one, there was the morning when Irena's mother and I happened to leave the apartment together on our way to the Metro. As we walked through a light drizzle, we made small talk about the differences between Moscow's gray jackdaw and its cousin, the American crow. Suddenly and for no apparent reason, she asked, almost as if talking aloud to herself, "Why are our people so sad?" At a loss for anything to say, I took it as the kind of lament that one often makes more easily to a stranger.

I dodged the issue with truisms about the problems caused by an abrupt transition from one form of government or economy to another. I had read the ugly statistics about life in the post-Communist nineties: the widespread unemployment and alcoholism, the poor medical services, the spread of AIDS with unlicensed prostitution, the dramatic drop in life expectancy for men—all leading to a projected population decrease of some ten million in the next decade. Surely there is enough cause for sadness.

My hosts, embodiments of the old Russian adage that pessimists are well-informed optimists, took these matters to heart. Nevertheless, the question Irena's mother asked went beyond economic and medical problems. In many ways her own life was better now: for the first time she could travel outside the country to participate in professional conferences in London and in America. And for the first time she owned property. She and her husband had even been able to put aside a modicum of hard currency. Yet it was obvious that somehow the new freedoms ironically did more to subvert her sense of independence than to enforce it.

The irony exists in part because the new policies, although based on reasonable free-market principles, fail to take into account the strong communal nature of such Russians as my hosts. Dreiser's diary is testimony that the Soviets of his day, for all their faults, did not make this mistake. To some extent, the sadness my hostess referred to has to do with the shattering of a shared sense of communal identity. Who in blazes are these Georgians who live in her building or the new Russians who eat at restaurants she cannot afford? For that matter, who is this Boris Yeltsin who rules without a party name—that is, without any recognizable symbol of national unity?

Put another way, her sadness was not merely personal. It could be heard in many voices, like that of the provost of the Moscow State University, the country's premier educational institution. At my request, Irena's parents arranged an interview for me at his office. A well-dressed, stout man in his early sixties, he spoke softly and deliberately, answering my questions as if he were reading from a script. Bright sunlight poured surreally from the window behind him, blurring his features and forming a halo around his head. The voice within the glow described the run-down condition of this historic building—which I saw in lecture halls and laboratories that could have served as sets for a Russian remake of *Blackboard Jungle*. He also talked at length about the brain drain caused by the loss of the satellite countries of the Soviet Union. Some of the most distinguished scholars of this time, he explained, were forced to relocate back to their lands of origin.

As an administrator, he defined his problems in terms of infrastructure and faculty shortage. But his comments contained the same uncertainties about the future of his community that were expressed by Irena's mother. How could he adequately educate the present generation? And how many among his best students would follow in the footsteps of their instructors? Teachers like the world-renowned geology professor who walked me

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through the centerpiece of the university, a stunning geology museum that was among the last remnants of former glory. Even Irena, a highly gifted student with a strong sense of vocation, wonders how she can survive as a professor in the new Russia.

Worry about survival shows on many faces. It is especially evident among women, who account for 70 percent of the unemployed. At age sixty they no longer automatically receive pensions. It is they who wait in lines outside the Metro stations, where each evening they bring loaves of bread, homemade clothing, and household items to sell for a few rubles. These are not street people, but plainly and decently dressed women who stand together, never hawking their wares, with goods in hand and with as much pride as they can muster.

Other women find other ways to survive. On a spare afternoon I decided to visit GUM, the enormous state department store that Dreiser mentions in the diary. I had walked hardly ten steps past the entrance when I was approached by someone who looked to be in her early thirties. She had very light brown hair and was dressed conservatively in a beige skirt, a cream-colored jacket, and white blouse; her modishly large-rimmed glasses framed blue-gray eyes. She looked like a proprietress of one of the mall's better stores. She spotted me as a foreigner and introduced herself in Italian. Not knowing she was Russian, I explained that I understood her but that I was an American and that we would have to proceed very slowly in Italian. She immediately switched to excellent English, and explained that she wanted to offer her services as a guide. In the most discreet way, she made it clear that that word was to be interpreted in its widest sense, that she lived alone, and could provide companionship at all hours. This for fifteen American dollars per day.

I was not exactly speechless, but perhaps something in the way I hesitated led her to add that she could also act as guide through museums and knew how to obtain good tickets for the theaters. I could have told her that I already had a "guide"; but I did not like referring to Irena in this wide sense of the word. So I lied and said I was an old hand here and knew the city well.

She politely thanked me, extended her hand and good wishes, and gave me her phone number in case I knew anyone—she added "male or female"—who could use her services. I was glad that dignity had been preserved on both sides; but in her voice there was more than a trace of the sadness that I was coming to recognize. Here was a woman, obviously educated, even cultured, with a knowledge of at least three languages, her youth and attractiveness still intact. She was barely out of sight when I realized that I had missed the chance to find out more about her. This is not a mistake Dreiser would have made.

At dinner that evening I mentioned this encounter. My hosts simply shook their heads in resignation and said that this was not uncommon today. The local tabloids put it more crudely: Russia has the best-educated class of whores in the world. The Communists had, after all, made higher education available to the majority of women. At my apartment, blame for the present state of the union and the depletion of the country's resources went to the lawless mafia's stranglehold on the government. Although I was suspicious of this explanation, I had no way of arguing the point. On the streets, I saw deprivation, not lawlessness.

I also saw outside Red Square daily gatherings of people making speeches, reciting poetry, and waving the familiar red flag of the Communist Party. I wondered if all this sadness would offer a wedge for a reactionary, right-wing demagogue like Vladimir Zhirinovsky to gain power. My friends assured me that most Russians would not vote for such a man. I had not at the time heard of Gennady Zyuganov, so I let that verdict stand.

Talk of the mafia was not confined to the evening dinner table or to Russians. At the Savoy, a famous gathering place for journalists in the heyday of print news, I met an American from San Francisco who, over hamburgers and fries, explained that he had come to make educational films for children. The idea was to create cartoon and puppet shorts that carried much-needed messages about nutrition to Russian homes. They were to entertain and instruct by linking, for example, the comic adventures of a rabbit with the foods that are necessary for good eyesight—like Popeye flexing his biceps after a shot of spinach. The funding for this project had been appropriated by the government. And then it disappeared. My American friend sipped espresso and explained how the mafia regularly robbed such soft-money projects.

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After lunch, talk shifted to another danger, the conduct of the ultra-nationalists who view the United States as the avatar of Western corruption. Two days before, the American embassy had been hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. Moscow newspapers linked this attack to demonstrators in St. Petersburg who were calling for revenge on Americans for the shedding of the blood of their Serbian "brothers in the Orthodox faith" during a NATO bombing campaign in Bosnia. Although Moscow and Washington firmly denied the connection, American officials did express concern for the safety of its citizens in Russia's major cities. The next evening I boarded the overnight train to St. Petersburg.

IV

The Soviets had put Dreiser up at the Hotel Europe, still the swankiest hotel in St. Petersburg. I checked into the distinctly plebeian Oktyabrskaya, which is a long block away from the Moscow Station. My room included a bathroom with a sign proudly announcing that it had been disinfected and contained toilet paper—two amenities Irena's parents warned me not to count on.

A late-morning stroll down Nevsky Prospekt confirmed that I had left the Byzantine capital of Boris Godunov and Ivan the Terrible and had come to Peter the Great's monument to the European Enlightenment. Here canals crossed broad thoroughfares with sunlight and cool breezes and led into the larger waterways of the Neva. The architecture and plan of the city evoked mental images of Paris, Venice, and Vienna. St. Isaac's and the Winter Palace, unlike the darkly medieval labyrinths of St. Basil's and the Kremlin, brought the comfort of familiarity to my Western eyes.

There seemed to be no sadness in this city. Shop windows showed off expensive jewelry and fine furs; the markets and cafés were clean, well-lighted places stocked with foreign food and drink; there were pricey antique and music houses and stores that sold rare books in many languages. I forced myself to remember that this was also the city of long winter darkness and of Dostoyevsky; I went and made my visit to the site of Raskolnikov's courtyard and dutifully counted the steps that led to the old lady's room.

Despite evidence to the contrary, a desire for sweetness and light persisted. I told myself that Dostoyevsky was a brilliant aberration. That St. Petersburg could never have inspired Mikhail Bulgakov's haunting *The Master and Margarita.* (Could the devil do his dirty work in a city with so few shadows?) Mafiosi, government corruption, the worst of social ills were forgotten among the unforgettable Rembrandts at the Hermitage. I followed Dreiser's path to pleasant places, even going to hear Tchaikovsky's *Eugen Onegin,* as he did, at the Moussorgsky Theater. Occasionally, I put my notebook aside and deviated from his route: to dine at the café where Pushkin met his second before his fatal duel, to search out Stravinsky's apartment and Nabokov's neighborhood, to tour the Russian Museum and the parks and golden fountains of Peterhof.

In the end, I was awakened from my dream of pleasure as much by aesthetic as by social facts. I tried my best to retain the tourist's sanitized view of things, but it became hard to avoid the obvious: the highly contrived character of St. Petersburg. Whatever Peter envisioned in 1703 when he began dredging the swamps for his "Window on the West," a day in the city's so-called Russian Museum speaks volumes about the concerted effort of generations to wipe out the country's Eurasian roots. The museum—in this respect, a metonym for the city—maintains the fiction that the beginning of Russian culture parallels that of late Western Europe. As a result, the galleries of its "early" period are replete with paintings that are bad imitations of François Boucher, Bernardo Bellotto, and Thomas Gainsborough. For all its splendor, the city increasingly seemed like a memorial to the ultimately tragic division between its founding family and the people it ruled. Dreiser did not appear to notice this when it was run by the Soviets and called Leningrad; but I began to see why he favored Moscow.

I tried to follow Dreiser's example as well as his path. Looking to outwit the VOKS agents who were bent on giving him the grand tour, he sought out what he called "the intimate, commonplace life of the city." Yet he had found it difficult, as I did, to tap into the factors at work below its civilized facade. Perhaps no foreigner can; but my best guess is that the public mask the city wears is a brave attempt to ward off forces that daily threaten to

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wreak havoc on its intimate, commonplace life.

Modern St. Petersburg, in its flagrant and showy style of lawlessness, reminds me of no city more than Chicago in the 1920s. If the nickname given to one of its most visible citizens is any indication, the city, too, has made this connection. The talk of the town today is of Alexander Malyshev, who is known locally as "the Al Capone of St. Petersburg." Like his American counterpart, he is flamboyant and arrogant in the face of authority, and his escapades are the stuff of myth. As was Capone, he is vulnerable only to ancillary charges, not to the murders, extortions, and white slavery markets he controls.

While I was there, Malyshev walked off free on fifty-two charges of conspiracy and racketeering. He had been arraigned under an article in the criminal code that only a year before had been adopted to fight organized crime. The trial had made daily news for four months, and the prosecution, having assembled sixty-three witnesses against him and his cohorts, had a winning case. But after three witnesses were murdered and the others refused to testify, the judge dismissed the charges. One former witness even reversed his testimony and pleaded guilty to the charge he had originally brought against one of Malyshev's lackeys, who had broken the man's jaw after he had accidentally grazed the side of a mob car. By the time the man went to court, he stood self-accused of having broken his own jaw when he illegally ran into the car.

Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, one of Russia's outstanding reform leaders, who, as I write, is being voted out of office, blamed the outcome on a system that has no legal weapons—a witness-protection program, for one—to battle organized crime. Malyshev met the good mayor's outcries with a defiant public display of victory: he himself held court in a local restaurant with all-night celebrations that featured a conspicuous amount of wine, women, and song. Sidewalk onlookers were treated to a spectacle in the oldest tradition of brigandage.

There was no celebration the following night in the popular Domenico's restaurant. Its Nigerian-born owner, an entrepreneur who made a large and respectable name for himself, was killed that day in a failed kidnap attempt, allegedly conducted by lower-level hoods. The mayor eulogized him and expressed sympathy for his wife and young children, but there were no indictments forthcoming

The fear that exists in the cosmopolitan air of the city was brought home to me when Irena and I dined at the Nevsky, which was listed as a reasonably priced restaurant with a good Russian kitchen. The evening started pleasantly. Dinner included a three-course meal, begun with mushrooms baked in a sour cream sauce, followed by a fish soup, very large and very tasty, and concluded with beef and potatoes in a stew covered with a thin pastry crust.

Unexpected entertainment came from a party of twenty sitting at a long table and celebrating the wedding anniversary of a couple who looked to be in their forties. My imaginative guide dubbed the husband the "King" because, she noted, he bore himself as the provider and master of the feast. And indeed he did. He made a staggering number of toasts, always with long-stemmed glasses of iced vodka chased by champagne. And his eye roamed freely beyond his wife's chair to the lady friends of the younger members of his entourage. The climax of the festivities came when he and his spouse rose, with the formal gestures of ballet dancers, to perform a beautifully executed Russian folk dance.

The party eventually settled down to a dessert of white frosted cake (washed down with beer). Suddenly a man walked in who startled me because of his remarkable likeness to Lenin. He was dressed in the dark cap and dull blue suit the Bolshevik leader wore to public events, and he moved with the gestures and body language of Lenin. Behind him followed an old man with a polaroid camera. The two traveled together, apparently working the watering holes of affluent Russians and offering to pose with them for a price. The "King" decided that this would be a jolly way to conclude the evening. A number of photographs were taken in mock-serious poses. At the end, the old man went to a side table to look over the results, and "Lenin" joined the party. Raising his glass he addressed the table with a toast that made everyone laugh. Irena said it was a famous remark made by Lenin after the Bolsheviks decided to overthrow the tzar: *"Prazilnoy dorogoy idete tozarishi,"* which means, loosely translated, "You have done the right thing."

Looking over the dessert list, I reflected on how Lenin, ostensibly relegated to the dust-

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heap of museum history, lived on in the Russian imagination, not only in his image on popular McDonald's T-shirts but, decadently, in the manner of the new Russians at the next table—and, more seriously, in the minds of Gennady Zyuganov and others who associate their dream of Russia's manifest destiny with idealized leaders of the past.

I was about to suggest a chocolate mousse when Irena became visibly upset. I asked what was wrong, and she said that we must leave. Right away. She pointed to a table across the room at which I had earlier noticed a couple with a teenage girl. Now two dark-haired men, who seemed to be in their late twenties, sat with them. Their dress—jeans and black leather jackets over plain white T-shirts—did seem out of place, but I remained puzzled by Irena's reaction. She explained that these were the dreaded Georgians whom she had been telling me about. Suspecting social paranoia, I tried to reason with her, saying this was like the fear many whites in America have of African-Americans they encounter in unfamiliar places. And, besides, who would want to bother a harmless, impecunious American professor and his mild-mannered guide?

My attempts at reason and humor did not impress her. She insisted that these men were more dangerous than the mafia bosses, that they preyed on such respectable places to flaunt their power. Their dress was in itself a sign of their assumed right to do as they pleased, and the table they decided to visit had no choice but to suffer their presence. The mangagement, she assured me, was helpless. As to the harmless American professor, he would be an object of harassment, at the least, if they chanced to come to our table.

I wondered why a decent young person such as Irena had to live with so much fear. Whatever the reason, she did start to sound convincing. My mind was now replaying scenes from Scarface movies—the ones with Al Pacino, Rod Steiger, and Robert De Niro. Were these men at the Nevsky like all those young Capones—or Malyshevs—out to make their bones, as the old American gangland expression goes? And on what better subject than a fellow whose government had only days before issued warnings about the mean streets of St. Petersburg? I had only one day left in this city; the morning after, I was scheduled to return to New York with a good-sized stack of research notes. I had indeed been lucky so far. Skipping dessert, I asked for the check.

And I asked myself on the trip back home how Dreiser, if he were alive, would react to the Russia of the mid-1990s. How would he write about it? An absolutist in all things but morality, he most likely would cite Veblen or Marx and blame the sadness on benighted capitalists—like the King and his Queen at the party—who ignore the lessons of history and thereby open the door to thugs who want a big slice of the cake they are eating. If he were in top form, he would go deeper, to the Greek tragedians he loved to quote on the nature of things. They might remind him to mention that sadness is universal. Then he probably would conclude with evidence from the modern mechanistic scientists. From them he would gather intellectual support for what he already knew as a matter of birthright: something about the instincts of all creatures for the various sweets of the world and the strong drives created in them by cakes they only get to watch others eat.

Not possessing such firm beliefs, I came back to America with more questions than answers. I also brought back a list of hopes: that good people like my hosts might find a way to deal with their sadness; that the reformers will eventually secure a more equitable and prosperous way of life for all; that peace will come soon to this part of our world.

Then I might return and follow Dreiser all the way to Odessa.

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The Time for Haste

CECIL MORRIS

He watches his mother in her kitchen,
shuttling from stove to sink to fridge
then back again along the circuit
where she makes the meals for her house.
She's nearly 80 now, almost twice his age,
and she hurries to get dinner ready
a little earlier every day.
Fifteen years retired,
and still she rushes at each task
as if her schedule's busier than ever.
She drives his father, too, from task to task,
denying him the hours he'd spend
watching TV or reading trashy westerns.
He doesn't understand his mother's haste.

Of course, she knows why she hurries,
though she couldn't put it into words,
couldn't tell her son or husband.
Still, she does know just as sure
as she knows love and right,
knows in the wordless aching of bones,
in the betraying numbness of tongue and ears.
She must hurry, must get things done.
If she could, she'd have tomorrow's dinner
tonight and get on to Thursday's
before it's too late.
She buys Christmas presents in July and August,
gives them by November at the latest,
and in fact is two years or more ahead
on presents bought and given.
The closer she comes to death,
the faster she moves.
She wants to be so far ahead
that no one will notice that she's gone
until years after she has died.

✪ CECIL MORRIS teaches English at Roseville High School in Roseville, California. His poems have appeared in *Poem*, the *Seattle Review*, *Negative Capability*, and other magazines.

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Degas in New Orleans

CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

If you should walk along Esplanade on an October morning in New Orleans, with your back to the river and the dark green buildings of the old French Market, you will be skirting the border of the French Quarter, or *vieux carré*, on your left, while on your right jut out the oddly angled, herringboned streets of the Faubourg Marigny. The grand, high-ceilinged houses on both sides of Esplanade, with their white columns and black ironwork along the balconies, date from the past century. The generous proportions of the shaded avenue, with its wide, tree-lined median, or "neutral ground" as it is called in New Orleans (testifying to old enmities between neighborhoods), mark a sharp contrast with the tight fit of the streets in the Quarter. Here on Esplanade you can stretch your legs and breathe, though the air is the thick, stagnant stuff wafting from the Mississippi. With the arching branches of oaks and magnolias dimming the viscous, greenish light, you can almost imagine you are traversing an aquarium.

Farther up, past Rampart Street, where a massive wall used to mark and protect another side of the Quarter, you begin to wonder how many more of these mansions there could be, one after the other like a formal receiving line. Who could afford to live in such luxury? Are they embassies perhaps? Funeral parlors? As you leave the Quarter farther behind, you note that more and more of the houses are in evident disrepair, their Greek Revival features chipped and worn, showing the wood under their marmoreal disguise. Chaotic clusters of mailboxes and doorbells indicate that they have been partitioned; careless piles of rubbish on verandas and unkempt lawns suggest apathetic renters.

Then, farther still, as the road turns almost imperceptibly upward (there are no hills in low-lying New Orleans), you have entered the neighborhood called Esplanade Ridge. Up there on the right is a sign for the Degas Cafe, and here on the left, metallic and scarred like a Civil War marker, is a sign that informs you that Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas, the great French Impressionist painter, lived here in 1872. The house behind the sign looks no different from its neighbors (though it is soon to undergo restoration). It, too, has a cluster of mailboxes and doorbells; the columns are chipped and dented; the yellow paint is peeling on the verandah. The black wrought-iron balconies, backed by green shutters, stretch like spider webs between the columns.

Edgar Degas traveled to New Orleans during the fall of 1872 to spend a few months visiting the considerable American branch of his family. The details of this visit—something of a legend in New Orleans, but barely known elsewhere—reveal a key moment in Degas's career; he left the city with a new sense of resolve and direction. As chance would have it, his five-month sojourn in New Orleans was also an extraordinarily rich and contentious time in the stormy history of the most exotic American city. (One could argue that it was *the* decisive moment in Reconstruction New Orleans.) What was it about this war-torn, diverse, and distracted city that elicited from Degas some of his finest works? And what can his paintings and letters tell us about New Orleans during a pivotal period in Reconstruction Louisiana? The reasons for Degas's jour-

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ney, what life was like for him in New Orleans, and the city's contribution to his development as an artist make for a fascinating, if still in some ways mysterious, narrative.

Degas was the only major French painter of the Impressionist generation to travel to the United States and paint what he saw there. Other French painters had ties to the New World, to be sure. As a young man, Manet had visited Brazil while working as a sailor and painted some of the exotic sights. Odilon Redon claimed to have been conceived in Louisiana, before traveling back to France in his mother's womb—he ascribed his taste for bright colors to the American South. Camille Pissarro's childhood in the Virgin Islands gave him subjects for a few early sketches, though once settled in France he never looked back. To the extent that she turned herself into a French painter (under her friend Degas's tutelage), Mary Cassatt is perhaps an exception. In any case it is surprising, to say the least, that Degas—one of the greatest painters to try his hand at American subjects—has received so little attention as an astute interpreter of the American scene. (Marilyn Brown's *Degas and the Business of Art* [1994] opens several lines of inquiry, with its penetrating comparison of Degas's own business dealings as an artist with the cotton and banking interests of his family.)

Degas thought of his journey to Louisiana as a homecoming of sorts. His mother, Célestine Musson Degas, had been born in New Orleans into a prominent Creole family; at her death in 1847 (when he was thirteen), she had left Edgar some property there. Over the centuries, *Creole* has meant many different things. For the Degas-Musson family it meant that Célestine, whose mother was a Rillieux, was descended from the original French and Spanish settlers of New Orleans. (The present-day Brennan's restaurant occupies her ancestral house on Royal Street.) Her father, Germain Musson, had left his native Haiti (or Saint Domingue) after Toussaint L'Ouverture's revolution and made a fortune in Louisiana cotton and Mexican silver.

Célestine's younger brother, Michel Musson, after a European education (he was a classmate of Longfellow's at Göttingen), had settled in New Orleans. Musson was a successful businessman in cotton and insurance—the proverbial *oncle d'Amérique* for Edgar and his two restless younger brothers René and Achille—until Reconstruction policies, and the worldwide depression of 1873, threw a wrench into his finances. Something of a social chameleon, Musson (who called himself "Michael" when convenient) managed to move freely between the two major parts of New Orleans society: the old-line French-speaking Creoles, who lived mainly below Canal Street, in and around the French Quarter; and the more recent "American" settlers in the city, who inhabited the commercial and residential neighborhoods, especially the Garden District, on the "uptown" side of Canal.

By 1870, Edgar's younger brothers René and Achille had both moved to New Orleans, refusing to take their places in the family banking business in Paris. They insisted on calling themselves "De Gas," flourishing a bogus coat-of-arms, though the bourgeois Degas family could claim no noble descent. René, in a move that shocked the family, promptly married his first cousin Estelle, one of Michel Musson's three daughters. The ill-fated alliance seems to have been as much for purposes of business (René worked for a time in Musson's cotton brokerage firm) as for love. The second Degas-Musson marriage in two generations, it knit the precarious fortunes of the two families even more closely together.

At the time of her marriage, Estelle ("Tell" to her family) was a Civil War widow. Her first husband, a Confederate captain called David Balfour, and a nephew of Jefferson Davis, had been killed in the hideous battle of Corinth, Mississippi. Soon after his death she gave birth to their daughter. In 1863, during the occupation of New Orleans by Federal troops, many citizens fled the city. Michel Musson stayed in New Orleans, but his wife and two of his three daughters, Estelle and Désirée, and Estelle's baby daughter Josephine, took refuge in France, where they were enthusiastically received by their cousins Edgar and René Degas. The women, whom Degas sketched on several occasions (a particularly poignant drawing is in the Art Institute of Chicago), stayed till the end of the war. But Estelle's return to New Orleans brought her another tragedy (not to be her last): her eyes—which, Degas noted in 1863, had looked on "the eyes of a dying man"—began to fail. By the time of Degas's journey to New Orleans ten

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years later, she was almost completely blind.

Surely a visit with René's family, who were expecting a child in December, was a major motivation for Degas's journey to New Orleans. But there were other reasons as well. Degas had not yet settled on the subjects and styles that would occupy him throughout his career. He had painted his first pictures of ballet rehearsals and race horses, but was uncertain about their quality. His commitment to painting contemporary life was recent and wavering, and he had not yet established a consistent market for his work. His service in the National Guard during the Prussian siege of Paris, and the horrible slaughter that followed the establishment of the Commune in 1871, had left him exhausted and depressed. When René visited Paris in the summer of 1872, and the brothers visited the sites where Edgar had served, René extended an invitation to accompany him back to New Orleans. He was surprised at Edgar's enthusiastic acceptance.

Once plans were in place for departure, Degas, who knew little English, developed a passion for English words. He wandered through the streets of Paris, repeating his favorite phrases. "Edgar . . . is crazy to learn to pronounce English words," René wrote to his wife Estelle in New Orleans on July 12, 1872, "he has been repeating *turkey buzzard* for a whole week."

Degas was thirty-eight when he began his five-month stay in the Crescent City. This is a Degas we do not know well. Almost all the vivid, eye-witness accounts we have—from the writers Paul Valéry and Daniel Halévy, from the painters George Moore and Walter Sickert—date from a quarter of a century later, when Degas, celebrated and successful, had developed a crusty, cantankerous carapace, from which he emerged occasionally to deliver his famously caustic and enigmatic *mots*. The Degas we meet in the early seventies, by contrast, is engaging, often chatty, and good company. A rare contemporary photograph, taken in New Orleans, shows a jaunty, bearded man, sailor's cap perched on his head. He looks upright, a bit like the soldier he still considered himself to be, but there's a friendly, amused look in his dark eyes.

Degas at thirty-eight was showing his first gray hairs, but he had barely begun the career that led to his lasting fame. Much of the work for which he is best known—the dancers, the bathers, the racehorses—was still in the future. So were the Impressionist exhibitions, in which he played such an important role. Degas in New Orleans was a Degas in transition, on the move.

From the moment of arrival, in late October 1872, everything American impressed Degas. New York, after the ten-day crossing by ship, struck him as a "great town and great port," with "charming spots" that Monet or Pissarro (those outdoor painters) could make something of. But what most impressed Degas was the American railroad, rebuilt after the decimation of the Civil War and extended throughout the South. Though Degas, unlike Monet or Manet, did not make the railroad a conspicuous subject in his painting, he had a technical interest—judging from his New Orleans letters—exceeding theirs. He viewed railroads less with the eye of the tourist-artist than with the perspective of an engineer, inspecting the "marvellous invention" of the sleeping cars, "as long as at least two carriages in France." He identified with the bankers, builders, and designers who had accomplished this remarkable feat. And rightly so, for Degas, the banker's son and grandson, owned stock in American railroads—just one of several American investments in his portfolio.

After crossing Lake Ponchartrain and rattling through New Orleans toward the Mississippi, the brothers were met at the makeshift railroad station at Elysian Fields by the whole Musson family. "My uncle looked at me over his spectacles; my cousins, their six children were there," Degas reported. He joined the bustling extended family in the spacious Esplanade house, which included, on the first floor, the recently widowed Michel Musson and his unmarried daughter Désirée, and on the second, the families of René De Gas and William Bell, a cotton dealer who had married Michel's third daughter Mathilde. Edgar took a spare bedroom in his uncle's wing of the house.

Degas liked to call himself a *"fils de Louisiane."* His letters from New Orleans betray a tension between his sense of himself as somehow a native of the city, an insider who knew its secrets, and as a mere tourist. He was curious, as ever, about how things worked. The ubiquitous streetcars in New Orleans, includ-

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ing the trams that rattled down Esplanade, seemed to Degas another example of American ingenuity. He visited New Orleans just as the city was experimenting with a steam-powered suburban railroad, and he took note of "a person here called Lamm who has invented an instrument said to be rather ingenious, which sets buses in motion at the top of the town by means of steam with which it supplies itself."

From his first days in New Orleans Degas was all eyes, the painter seeking and finding fresh material, and trying to decipher the visual clues around him. "Everything attracts me here," he wrote. "I look at everything." He marveled at the sheer visual feast offered up by the markets and streets of the city, and dutifully filled his letters, such as this one to the painter James Tissot, with breathless lists of scenery:

> Villas with columns in different styles, painted white, in gardens of magnolias, orange trees, banana trees, negroes in old clothes like the junk from *La Belle Jardinière* or from Marseilles, rosy white children in black arms, charabancs or omnibuses drawn by mules, the tall funnels of the steamboats towering at the end of the main street, that is a bit of local color if you want some.

He was astonished at what he called "the black world"—"I shall be very surprised to live among white people only in Paris"—and admired the beauty of the "negresses of every shade" that he saw at the market as well as in the house, among the many servants and nurses, on Esplanade. What extraordinary paintings he could make with all this splendor. "I am accumulating plans which would take ten lifetimes to carry out," he promised.

But almost immediately, with the caustic irony that would deepen as Degas got older, he claimed to be unable to paint any of these things. The light was too bright; the models wouldn't stand still; his sojourn in New Orleans wasn't long enough to really make sense of these materials ("nothing but a really long stay can reveal the customs of a people. . . . Instantaneousness is photography, nothing more"). And besides, a painter of exotic subjects like Manet—"Manet would see lovely things here"—or Delacroix was more right for these subjects than the relentlessly urbane Parisian Degas. ("Everything is beautiful in this world of the people," he confided to Tissot. "But one Paris laundry girl, with bare arms, is worth it all for such a pronounced Parisian as I am.")

To make matters worse, Degas's eyes—those indispensable tools for a painter—were giving him serious trouble. The fact that the very first thing he saw in New Orleans was his uncle's spectacles was somehow ominous, talismanic. For Degas, at this moment, was afraid he was going blind. The trip to New Orleans may well have been planned partly with this emergency in mind, to give his eyes a rest, especially from the intense, small pictures—like those of the ballet rehearsals—that he had been working on in Paris.

After a list of visual enticements, he added a rueful aside about the "brilliant light at which my eyes complain." On November 27 his eyes were feeling "much better," but a week later he was complaining again about the light that prevented him from working along the river, where the ship-lined levee and the French Market offered so many inviting subjects: "My eyes are so greatly in need of care that I scarcely take any risk with them at all."

The origin of his eye trouble was obscure even to Degas himself, and some have suspected psychosomatic causes, or at least irritants. But he consistently traced his problems to his days in the National Guard during the Franco-Prussian War, when he joined Manet and other artists in the defense of Paris. Perhaps an infection set in, caused by a combination of malnutrition (in the famous Parisian winter the elephants in the Paris zoos were slaughtered to feed the besieged and starving populace) and frigid air in the attic where he was quartered. Or perhaps, as he told his friend the poet Paul Valéry, his eyes were ruined by the gunnery practice. In any case, Degas thought of his damaged eyes as a war wound, a badge of courage he could have done without. He had no way of knowing, in 1872, that his eyesight would trouble him for the rest of his life, but never darken completely. At this time he was filled with foreboding, almost panic. At the start of his late-blooming career as an artist, here he was, going blind.

And yet, there is something disingenuous about all Degas's disclaimers and excuses in these New Orleans letters. He seems to be saying that of course he would paint all the ex-

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pected exotic sights of New Orleans—if only his eyes could tolerate the light. If this were Monet or Pissarro, portable easel in hand, we might believe him. But this is Degas, after all, who never showed any fondness for plein air painting, and who was perfectly happy to fake seashores ("I spread my flannel coat on the floor in my studio and make the model sit on it," he explained to Ernest Rouart) and deploy miniature horse races within the confines of his studio. The landscapes he painted (recently exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York) were often purely imaginary, or loosely based on remembered glimpses from a train. "For you, natural life is necessary," he told a landscape painter, "for me, artificial life." It seems more likely that Degas knew what his friends would expect ("local color if you want some") from a Louisiana sojourn—the sort of exotic images Manet or Delacroix brought back from Spain or Egypt—and he with his habitual cussedness found a way to sidestep them. His eye problems, no doubt real enough, gave him a ready excuse to paint what he felt like painting, and to stay—where he always preferred to stay—indoors. Consequently, he was able to paint a much deeper portrait of the troubled society he found in New Orleans, and in the crowded house on Esplanade, than the slick surfaces of exoticism would have allowed.

Of Degas's daily life in New Orleans, we know little. Aside from dinner parties and concerts mentioned in his letters, and his plans to visit the new ice factory (more Yankee technology), we don't know how he amused himself. There were musical soirees in the house, a favorite pastime among Creole families; Degas painted one of them, with his brother René at the piano (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington). It seems unthinkable that Degas, an avid connoisseur and painter of the sport, did not attend the races in New Orleans. His cousin-in-law William Bell served on the board of the new track a few blocks farther up Esplanade; a spectacular Esplanade mansion, formerly owned by the Lüling family, relatives of the Mussons, served as the clubhouse. But there is no evidence that Degas attended the races, and attempts to link some of his pictures to the New Orleans track are unconvincing.

Did Degas sample the Crescent City nightlife, the café concerts so like the Parisian ones he'd shown off to René the previous summer? Did he frequent the brothels—already famous in New Orleans a quarter century before Storyville—that ornamented almost every block in the French Quarter? He certainly had a taste for them in Paris (he began his pornographic brothel monotypes later in the 1870s), and New Orleans society would wink at the needs of a bachelor visitor nearing forty. Again, no evidence.

And finally did he attend Mardi Gras—perhaps even prolonging his trip to take in the spectacle? While visiting Edgar in Paris, René had been looking into insect costumes ("all ravishing, from the ladybug to the roach") for the Mystik Krewe of Comus. There was great excitement about the politically charged (and violent) Mardi Gras of 1873, the theme of which was "The Descent of Man," with President Grant and his representatives in Louisiana assigned various bestial identities. It hardly seems likely that Degas did *not* watch the Mardi Gras parades that February, especially since René—as the records of the Pickwick Club prove—was a participant; but if he did, he said nothing about it.

What we do know is that each day Degas made his way—presumably by streetcar—across the French Quarter to his brothers' firm in the commercial sector above Canal Street to check for mail from France and read the newspapers. Then he returned to the house on Esplanade where he chatted with his relatives and worked on portraits of them. "All day long I am among these dear folk," he reported, "painting and drawing, making portraits of the family."

There are persistent and continuing debates over which paintings Degas actually painted in New Orleans, and over the identities of their models. Almost every portrait of a woman thought to have been painted in New Orleans has at one time or another been identified as a portrait of Estelle. The other New Orleans paintings cannot be grouped around shared techniques or style—this was a time of great experimentation for Degas. Always careful of his travel reading, he took to New Orleans a copy of Rousseau's *Confessions*, and twice in his letters he drew attention to a passage late in the book when Rousseau reported that he "used to go out at daybreak, that whichever way he went, without noticing it, he

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examined everything, that he started on work that would take ten years to finish and left it without regret at the end of ten minutes. Well," Degas added, "that is my case exactly."

And what did he paint? His family and their friends and business associates, mainly, just as in Paris he had painted his family and friends. (Degas did not accept commissions for portraits.) All three Musson daughters sat for him, as did a gaggle of squirming nieces and nephews with their black nurse, playing in the courtyard of the Esplanade house. His affectionate painting *Children on a Doorstep (New Orleans)* records the kind of racially mingled scene ("rosy white children in black arms") that shocked many Northern visitors to the Reconstruction South. (To the argument that integrated schools would somehow "contaminate" white children, the New Orleans writer George Cable scornfully replied, in 1875, that such children "pass from infancy to and through the impressible and educable years of childhood still in the [black] nurse's care.")

But from the start it was Estelle especially who occupied Degas's attention. He mentioned her in almost every letter, emphasizing her blindness. "She bears [her blindness] in an incomparable manner," he noted; "she needs scarcely any help about the house. She remembers the rooms and the position of the furniture and hardly ever bumps into anything. And there is no hope!" In his haunting portraits of blind and pregnant "Tell," Degas invested a good deal of his own fears, especially of blindness. There is an uncanny mirroring quality, as well as an unmistakable yearning, in Degas's portraits of his beautiful and sorrowful cousin, particularly the unnerving portrait of Estelle in the National Gallery in Washington. Estelle is placed to one side of the composition, awkwardly perched on a chaise longue, and surrounded by an eerie reddish background with no props or furniture—a blind person's disorientation and void. For Degas, Estelle came to embody his experience of his mother's city. Like the Janus float in the annual Mardi Gras parade, it always presented two faces to Degas: stunning visual beauty and occluding, mournful darkness.

Other visitors confirmed that the Crescent City, so pleasing to the eye, so bursting with color, was also a city in mourning, dressed in black. The New England journalist Edward King, visiting in 1873 at exactly the time Degas was there, described the extraordinary gardens glimpsed in French Quarter courtyards (like the one in which Degas painted the children playing), with their rose bushes and orange trees set against the dark green of magnolias. But then the reality of the scene shifts:

> From the balconies hang, idly flapping in the breeze, little painted tin placards, announcing "Furnished apartments to rent!" Alas! in too many of the old mansions you are ushered by a gray-faced woman clad in deepest black . . . and you instinctively note by her manners and her speech that she did not rent rooms before the war. You pity her, and think of the multitudes of these gray-faced women; of the numbers of these silent, almost desolate houses.

When we look at Degas's portraits of New Orleans women (such as another portrait of Estelle in the Delgado Museum in New Orleans), we can see how he used the juxtaposition of flowers and mourning in ways quite similar to Edward King in his prose.

Despite the brevity of his stay, Degas was also consciously painting a society, and specifically the decimated Creole society of post–Civil War New Orleans. This self-styled aristocracy, always scornful of modern business practices, had already, before the war, financially lost out to the "American invasion" that followed the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The Civil War put an end to their social status as well. Old Creole families such as the Mussons continued to speak French and to cling to the props of the ancien régime way of life: the box at the opera, the books about Marie Antoinette, the mansion on Esplanade, the black servants (former slave-owning families considered white servants déclassé), the visits from trained "aestheticians" (one of Degas's most charming New Orleans paintings records the visit of the pedicurist to tend to a young niece's toenails).

But the opera was closed during the winter season of 1872—owing to a shipwreck, in which several singers drowned. The canceled opera was a special privation for Estelle, Degas noted. Though pregnant women did not show themselves in New Orleans society, there were separate grilled loges for them (and for women in mourning) at the opera. "We would have hired a box for her," Degas remarked, "and she would never have missed going ex-

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cept during the actual confinement." And that other prop of Creole status, the mansion on Esplanade, was rented, not owned, by Musson. ("Not own your residence!" exclaims an old Creole matron in a Grace King story set during the 1870s in New Orleans. "As soon not own your own tomb as your residence!")

"Fair France still has a quarter of a foot in Louisiana," Degas remarked resignedly to Tissot. "The Creole cannot measure strength with the Yankee." The result of the crumbling world of the Creoles was a powerful nostalgia for the pre-war world, a nostalgia that—tempered with realism—gave rise to some of the best writing of the post-war South. For just as the Creole world was on the wane, it became a rich mine for such writers as Kate Chopin (whose husband owned a cotton firm next door to the Musson firm) and George Washington Cable as well as for Degas. They chose many of the same subjects: the tension between Creoles and "Americans" (Chopin's novel *The Awakening* is built around an ethnically "mixed" marriage); the intimacy in which Creoles lived with their African-American servants; the ever-present commodity of cotton. ("One does nothing here, it lies in the climate, nothing but cotton," Degas noted wryly, "one lives for cotton and from cotton.")

But the precarious status of the Creoles—beaten by the uptown "Americans" before the Civil War, and by the Northern Yankees during and after it—had another, more troubling result. In New Orleans, Degas was living, as it happened, in the midst of a group of men of such strong political convictions, and such an acute sense of their own slipping status, that they were willing to resort to violence to seize what they regarded as their birthright. Degas arrived just in time to witness the corrupt and contested state election of 1872, and stayed long enough for the first of several coup attempts that followed. The bitterness arising from the election—which placed an interim African-American governor, then a carpetbagger, in office—lasted for several years, culminating in the bloody confrontation of 1874, known as the "Battle of Liberty Place," when members of the Crescent City White League fought with the integrated Metropolitan Police and thirty people died before Federal troops restored order.

The Musson family was deeply enmeshed in the very highest reaches of New Orleans politics. Michel Musson had been a leader in the so-called "Unification Movement," an attempt to bring about cooperation between white and black businessmen (and not so incidentally put an end to Reconstruction business practices thought to be unfair to whites). When Unification failed to catch hold in the rest of Lousiana, many of its participants looked to more radical measures. It was Musson who presided over the white supremacist White League's planning meeting, just before the Liberty Place battle, while his son-in-law William Bell (another inhabitant of the Esplanade house) served as treasurer for the White League. (Bell's friend and business partner, General Fred N. Ogden, was the military commander of the White League militia.)

Degas could hardly have been unaware of these things. While his letters and paintings from his sojourn avoid explicit commentary on the political scene in New Orleans, this shrewd political reactionary could hardly have been oblivious to his surroundings, as some critics have suggested. Having watched Paris a couple of years earlier go from empire to republic, he was attuned to signs of change in New Orleans. One has only to juxtapose his painting of the interior of a New Orleans cotton brokerage with a characteristic observation from his correspondence, "the contrast between the busy, so well arranged offices and this immense black animal force," to sense his own awareness of the tensions built into the city's economy. His uncle's house on Esplanade was a center of intrigue; it is likely that several of the secret White League meetings occurred there. And there, in the parlors and along the balconies, Degas painted and listened, listened and painted.

Degas's visit, originally planned for three months, stretched to almost six, well into the busy Carnival season. Initially homesick and yearning for his familiar subjects, he found himself more and more fascinated, visually and emotionally, by his new surroundings. His passionate engagement with one painting—his famous *Cotton Office in New Orleans*—may have helped him decide to stay on in the city.

In that painting, fourteen men—including Degas's brothers Achille and René, his uncle Michel Musson, and his cousin by marriage, William Bell—are depicted in Musson's cotton

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brokerage firm. It is one of the great depictions of modern business life, capturing the loose order of commercial transactions. But it is also a family portrait, packed with private meanings. The Musson cotton firm, as it happened, had just collapsed (René, reading the *Picayune* in the center of the painting, could be reading the bad news), and the complex and precarious choreography of the painting may allude to that fact. Michel Musson himself seems to be slipping, literally, out of the picture, an apt image of the Creole loss of status. He is dressed in mourning (not only in the frock coat that Baudelaire thought the "inevitable uniform of our suffering age . . . the mark of perpetual mourning"); the empty chair beside him may suggest the recent death of his wife. His anomalous position, with his back turned to the activities of the firm as he idly fingers a sample of cotton, compounds the impression of isolation.

This composition, not much larger than the outspread *Picayune* in René's hands, has a peculiar intensity. It is easy to think that the political engagement of its models—Musson, Bell, and these other dispossessed Creoles—gives an unsettling quality to the precarious composition. Like the ballet pictures it resembles, the *Cotton Office* has its own, somewhat sinister choreography. The men assume the various casual attitudes and gestures of their trade along the raked floor and loge-like windows. But these leaders of the White League, co-conspirators as Degas must have known them to be, may indeed be rehearsing something—namely, the violence about to erupt around them.

That violence turned out to be not only political—in the pitched battle of Liberty Place—but personal as well for the Musson-Degas clan. The death of Degas's father, August, in February 1874, and the surprising revelation that the family banking firm was in dire straits, was followed, in quick succession, by an episode in front of the Paris Bourse the following year, in which Achille, having fired a revolver at the husband of his mistress, was sentenced to six months in prison. Then, in April 1878, René De Gas deserted Estelle and their six children and ran off with a married neighbor (whom he married in Cleveland) named America Olivier. (Her house, looming on the horizon, is visible in the background of Degas's *Children on a Doorstep.*) A month after he left, the youngest child died; six months later, another died in a yellow fever epidemic. Soon two more of Estelle's children—one of them Josephine Balfour, now in her teens—died. Half-paralyzed, and descending into an understandable paranoia of his own, in which he accused William Bell of keeping his grandchildren from visiting him, Michel Musson himself eventually died, in 1885.

But all this was in the future. Edgar Degas left New Orleans with a fresh resolve. His final letter, to Tissot, is full of eagerness. "I feel that I am collecting myself and am glad of it. It took a long time. . . . But my vanity is positively American!" He feels a new confidence in French painting: "Our race will have something simple and bold to offer. The naturalist movement will draw in a manner worthy of the great schools and then its strength will be recognized." And so on. America has also, he reports with some amusement, given him "the taste for money, and once back I shall know how to earn some I promise you." A psychoanalytic critic might see more in such resolution—the successful "dealing with" his mother's death, for example, in this journey to her homeland, and, through the portraits of Estelle, a less anguished relation to his threatened eyesight.

But even a less speculative account of Degas's American journey reveals that it gave Degas a fresh sense of direction and inspiration. It also proves that Degas, the quintessentially Parisian painter, was a significant observer of American society and politics. Degas's paintings and letters from the early 1870s provide a fresh and unexpected perspective on a turbulent period in New Orleans history. And that history, in turn, casts a new and revealing light on some of his most mysterious paintings.

When Degas heard, many years later, that his friend Paul Gauguin was looking for an exotic place free of the strictures of modern life, and was considering the South Sea Islands, he advised him to go to New Orleans instead. "But he decided," Degas dryly remarked, "that it was too civilized." Gauguin was probably right, as far as his own needs were concerned. But the advice suggests that New Orleans was just the right place for Edgar Degas, when he himself needed a change of scene and direction.

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Two Women Geneticists

NINA V. FEDOROFF

This is going to be a tale of two women in science, Barbara McClintock and me, separated in age by forty years. I used to think that my life's path was so idiosyncratic that others couldn't learn much from the telling. This feeling was reinforced some years ago by Phil Abelson, then the editor of *Science* magazine, who had been asked to give a talk on why some women make it in science. Now just why Phil was viewed as someone who knew something about this subject isn't clear to me. But he was obviously clueless, and the way he went about preparing his talk was to call some of his acquaintances among the still rather small group of such women and chat with them for a while—a very scientific approach. I've forgotten the specifics, but I do remember that he didn't much like my answers. They didn't fit the hypotheses he'd developed about what was common, and therefore maybe essential, in the backgrounds of successful women scientists.

Phil Abelson was also, for a time, the president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, where McClintock spent more than fifty years and I spent twenty years doing research. Barbara told me that Abelson once asked her to come to Washington to chat with the wives of the members of the board of trustees during the annual meeting. McClintock was at that time already a distinguished scientist, long a member of the National Academy of Sciences, though it would have been a few years before she received the Nobel Prize for her work in genetics. All she would say about the incident is that "he will never know how deeply he offended me."

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Maybe the very fact that neither of us fit too well into anyone's ideas is reason enough to tell you a bit about each of us. McClintock's mother was a poet and painter, and her father was a physician. McClintock was an odd child, the third of four children, and her relationship with her mother was a difficult one from the beginning—she didn't like to talk about it much to anyone, but my sense was that her mother simply found her difficult, baffling—unmanageable. For a time, from about the age of three until she started school, she went to live with an aunt and uncle. She accompanied her uncle in his work as a fish dealer, first in a horse-drawn cart and later in his first motor truck—she loved going along with him and attributed her later interest in cars to having watched her uncle struggle with his vehicle's frequent malfunctions.

Barbara had a very important relationship with her father, who was extremely perceptive of and responsive to her. Even as a child, McClintock had an uncanny sensitivity toward people—as an adult she could never hide it enough—people felt utterly transparent when they were with her, and this made many people very uncomfortable. Barbara recounted that as a schoolchild she had a teacher who disturbed her intensely—she found her evil. Rather than make light of her reaction to the teacher, McClintock's father took her out of school and provided her with a private tutor that year. And despite what was always a strained relationship between them, McClintock's mother fully supported her unconventional daughter, who was a loner and an oddball, preferring to play sports with boys or read—or just sit and think.

Barbara described an incident from her Brooklyn childhood in which a neighbor chided her for playing boys' games in the street, telling her it was time for her to learn

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to do things that girls do. When her mother heard of the incident, she telephoned the neighbor and firmly told her never again to speak to her daughter in this fashion. McClintock went to Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn, and during her years there it became increasingly obvious that she would not outgrow her childhood oddities and become anything like a conventional young woman. She discovered science—she loved to learn and, most of all, to figure things out. Barbara recalled her mother's deep concern that she might become a female college professor; her mother viewed women professors as creatures that really didn't belong to society and were certain to have a difficult life. During this period, Barbara became increasingly aware that doing what she wanted to do would have painful consequences.

But she said that she knew, by that time, that she had to follow her own inclinations, whatever the consequences. At one point she said she thought long and hard about what women had to do to catch and keep men—and her conclusion was that she wasn't about to, so she cut her hair short and went her own way. When Barbara graduated from high school in 1918, the family situation was difficult. She never talked much about it, but I suspect that her father had left her mother for another woman and money was very tight. Barbara had her heart set on going to Cornell. But there wasn't any money, and her mother was firmly opposed to further education for her daughters, believing that it made them unmarriageable. Barbara took a job at an employment agency and spent evenings continuing her education by reading in the library. Just days before the semester started, her father intervened, and Barbara got on a train to Ithaca. Where the money came from, she never knew.

Barbara flourished at Cornell, both socially and intellectually. She loved learning and she was well liked—so much so that she was elected president of the women's freshman class. But the decisions she made during her university years were consistent with her adamant individuality and self-containment. She enjoyed her social life, but she knew that none of her relationships would last. Her comfort with solitude and the tremendous joy that she felt in knowing, learning, and understanding were to be the defining themes of her life. In her junior year, after a particularly exciting course in genetics, her professor invited her to take a graduate course in genetics. After that, she was treated much like a graduate student, and by the time she had finished her undergraduate course work, she had definitely decided that she would continue her studies in genetics.

I grew up in a family that was Russian: they were noblemen, scientists, clerics, and diplomats under the Russian czars. Cast adrift in the last cataclysmic upheaval of their culture three-quarters of a century ago, they scrambled to survive. They started afresh in America, bringing along their own mixed bag of family history. In the contemporary jargon of pop psychology, it was a "dysfunctional" family. Clinging as it did to its own bit of nineteenth-century culture, its special message for girls was that they weren't worth much. But I was a stubborn, independent, ornery kid, something my mother missed no opportunity to tell anyone who'd listen. I knew I wanted to be something long before I knew what it was that I wanted to be. I spent my childhood rebelling in ways both constructive and destructive. By sixteen, I was taking college-level history courses and teaching music. By seventeen, I was pregnant and had quit school and married. Somehow—and I can't really remember how—I persuaded my school to let me take the state exams on my own. I graduated first in my class, and I burned to go on learning—something that wasn't on my Air Force husband's agenda for me. While he was out of the country on a tour of duty, I talked my way into Syracuse University, found someone to care for my baby during the day, and started attending classes. It was a magical time for me: reading and thinking and writing were my sanity, and I loved every minute of every class. In due time, my perfidy was discovered. My husband returned to collect his family and take us along on his next assignment. When I refused to quit classes just weeks before the end of term, my husband beat me unconscious, cleaned out the account in which I'd saved a few hundred dollars for a second semester, and left town.

Enter my first white knight: she was Syracuse University's elderly, white-haired, financial-aid officer—I don't remember her name. She bent the rules for me and handed me a

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scholarship, a lifeline. My family wasn't giving me a penny: I'd broken its rules for girls, and they were ashamed of me. And I kept on breaking rules. I had as keen a love of music as I had of books, so one day I took off again (my baby Natasha and I), this time to Philadelphia to study under the legendary William Kincaid, the greatest flutist of his time. To keep us going, I got a clerical job with an organization called Biological Abstracts. I think they hired me because I said I knew Russian. I was soon translating, abstracting, and generally running their Translation Bureau, whose nominal head was a kindly, boozy man who couldn't keep his head above the rising tide of paper in his office. Biological Abstracts became my second lifeline: I survived the next years by translating and abstracting. Biological Abstracts is now known as BIOSIS, and I go back there twice a year. I'm a member of its board of trustees—imagine that.

But I'm getting ahead of myself; things got worse before they got better. It seems today as if all this happened in another century: it was almost impossible to get a divorce, the pill was just getting out of the laboratory, and abortions were illegal. Still married, I met another man—and had another child. My life was a total mess. All I had was determination and ambition, which hardly looked like they were going to do me much good. Bit by bit, I started getting it back together. I decided to give up the second child for adoption, figured out how to get a divorce and got one, and supported myself, my daughter, and the lawyers by translating and teaching music. Eventually I got my scholarship back and returned to Syracuse University, having decided to do something useful and become a doctor.

I signed up for a bunch of science courses and had another extraordinary bit of luck: my zoology professor invited me into his lab. I got a six-hundred-dollar National Science Foundation summer undergraduate research award, and my professor took me along to Woods Hole that summer. By day I squashed *Drosophila* salivary chromosomes, by night I worked as a translator in order to support us—Natasha, the babysitter, and me. The pittance I'd been receiving from the Air Force to support my child disappeared that summer, and I was on my own. But what a time! One grand day I went to play chamber music; the rehearsal was at Albert Szent-Gyorgyi's house, and James Watson was the houseguest that week. Another day Bob Allen, the cellist in our group, helped me look at chromosomes using the then brand-new Nomarski optics—intoxicating stuff for any college kid. And there were lectures every day on every imaginable subject. I was hooked: science was to be my thing, experiments my way of life.

Easier said than done, of course. I thought I had it made when I received an NSF fellowship and was accepted for graduate study at Rockefeller University. But I still had the gauntlet of Professor Norton Zinder's lab to run—not a hospitable climate for women. I remember a day when one of the post-docs turned to me and said: "You'd better be glad you're not a girl, or we'd run you out of here!"—daft compliment of a sort, I guess. And then there was the time that my professor's wife said to me: "Nina, I think that you're going to change Norton's mind about women in the lab." I finally began to think that maybe I would make it.

But Ph.D.'s are beginnings, not endings. I had a tough time getting my career off the ground; at times I thought I'd blown it altogether. I'd married again—badly again. I'd had another child, another treasure. I'd taught some, done some research, but it wasn't great. Eventually my luck returned, and I had a chance to join Donald Brown's lab at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Embryology Department. I think he only let me in the door because I was carrying my own money under my arm—I'd managed to get a Damon Runyan fellowship. It was a heady time. Don had cloned some of the first genes to be cloned, and I got to sequence some of the first genes ever to be sequenced.

When I was close to finishing my post-doctoral stint, I was invited to present my work at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Late in the day I ran into a tiny elderly woman. Although I didn't know her, I guessed immediately that this must be Barbara McClintock. She surprised me by apologizing for missing my lecture (Why should she apologize?) and invited me to her laboratory for a talk. (I have it firmly in my memory that we drank Cinzano and ate peanuts—Barbara always said that only the part about the peanuts was right.) I was very much taken with the lucidity of McClintock's casual discourse—science, scientists, politics, philosophy—the usual stuff of late af-

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ternoon lab visits. It didn't fit her reputation for impenetrability, and I was curious—curious enough to find the old *Carnegie Year Books* where her writings had appeared, and I started to read them upon my return to Baltimore.

Barbara's fascination with genetics had kept her at Cornell in the hopes of working with Cornell's outstanding geneticists. Unfortunately, genetics was taught in the plant breeding department, which didn't take female graduate students, so McClintock registered in the botany department. To support herself, she went to work for Lowell Randolph. It didn't last long—they didn't get along, but as Marcus Rhoades, her lifelong friend and champion, said: "Their brief association was momentous because it led to the birth of maize cytogenetics." Barbara rapidly figured out how to identify each of the maize chromosomes, laying the groundwork for a veritable explosion of discoveries that connected the behavior of chromosomes with the genetic properties of organisms and defining the new field of cytogenetics. She received her Ph.D. in 1927 and managed to eke out some kind of support for the next few years. As Rhoades told it: "The years at Cornell from 1928 to 1935 were ones of intense cytogenetical activity. Progress was rapid, the air electric." Discoveries, in all of which McClintock was central, came rapidly, and McClintock's fame was growing.

In 1933, McClintock received a Guggenheim Fellowship to go to Germany. She was utterly unprepared for what she encountered in pre-war Germany, and she returned to Cornell before the year had elapsed. Her prospects were dismal. She had completed graduate school seven years earlier and had already attained international recognition, but, as a woman, she had little hope of securing a permanent academic position at a major research university. Her extraordinary talents and accomplishments were widely appreciated, but she was also seen as "difficult" by many of her colleagues—in large part because of her quick mind and intolerance of second-rate work and thinking. Finally, in 1936, Lewis Stadler secured her a position at the University of Missouri, where she started working on what happens to chromosomes broken by X-irradiation. Although her reputation continued to grow, her position at Missouri was tenuous—she was definitely a troublemaker, reprimanded regularly for such stunts as climbing walls to get into the laboratory so she could keep on working at night.

In 1941 she took a leave of absence and left with no intention of returning—and no idea of what she was going to do. She ended up at the Carnegie Institution's Genetics Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor for the summer, an invitation arranged by her friend Marcus Rhoades. And there she stayed for the rest of her life. Milislav Demerec, later the director, persuaded her to go down to Washington for an interview with Vanevar Bush, the president of the Institution. They got on very well, and, despite her reluctance to make commitments, McClintock accepted his offer to become a staff scientist.

She continued her work on broken chromosomes, devising a method for making new mutations by crossing plants, each with a broken chromosome 9. It was in the progeny of these plants that she began to see odd things: a chromosome site that always broke in the same place—or almost always, because it could occasionally move and take up residence somewhere else. She'd never seen anything like a moving gene, and she worked hard in the ensuing few years to prove that this funny gene really did move. In 1948 she made the first announcement in the literature that there were transposable genetic elements. To geneticists of the time, this was roughly equivalent to claiming that the kitchen could occasionally jump into the attic in the middle of the night. By the time of the 1951 Cold Spring Harbor Symposium, she had plenty of evidence and presented a paper describing her work. As Barbara told it, the reaction to her presentation ranged from perplexed to hostile. Later, she published several papers, and from the paucity of reprint requests, she inferred an equally cool reaction on the part of the larger biological community to the astonishing news that genes could move. After that, McClintock wrote up her results as if for publication and filed them, publishing little more than concise summaries of her results in the annual *Year Book* of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

These *Year Books* were all on the shelves at Carnegie's Embryology Department. I dragged them down, copied her reports, and started to read. I had to learn McClintock's language (no surprise here, she had given words—a long time ago—to things that no one was

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ready to see). I had, laboriously, to figure out the genetic crosses. And I had experiments to do, too, and a child to take care of. But I found myself impatient to read on, to get back each evening to the next year's installment of work in progress and discover how she'd figured it out. The stuff was complicated. And yet it was clear and logical and beautiful. I tried to explain it to others, but I failed altogether (as I would for a rather long time, and until I stopped trying to communicate it *all* each time, there was, and still is, too much to swallow in one gulp).

It seemed to me that working out the molecular biology of this system would be grand fun but not a practical undertaking for the beginning of a career. Although by that time transposition was no longer heretical, since transposable elements had long since come to light in *E. coli*, very little molecular work had been done in plants—plant molecular biology didn't exist yet. McClintock was still an obscure figure; most of another decade would elapse before her profound discovery was recognized with a Nobel Prize. Not a single maize gene had been cloned, and some of my colleagues were even saying that plant DNA couldn't be cloned (I even had a few graduate students ask me whether plants had DNA). The notion that I could learn maize genetics, develop molecular cloning techniques for plants, clone and characterize transposable elements (on the tiny grants that were being awarded for plant research), in addition to teaching and in time to get tenure at a university seemed, well, absurd. And I was a single parent and took being a parent seriously.

But I didn't give up the idea, just tucked it away. One day my director called me into his office and simply offered me a staff position at Carnegie. It was a completely unexpected gift, and it immediately dislodged my tucked-away fantasy: I made an impulsive commitment to work out the molecular biology of maize transposable elements. Yet doing it turned out to be much harder than I'd imagined at worst. Many times I wanted to give up, especially in my first summer of 5:00 A.M. to 2:00 A.M. days in the field doing maize genetics at the Brookhaven Laboratory, where Barbara had grown her corn in her last years as an active geneticist. Well, you just can't stop during pollination season, and it quickly became apparent that my technician was violently allergic to corn pollen, so I sent him home to Baltimore. I was barely managing, and Barbara and I couldn't agree on anything—she just thought I was doing everything wrong. I think the summer's nadir came when my son's summer camp director called and announced: "Your son has impetigo. Please come and get him and don't bring him back."

And yet I did get through the summer without giving up, and, despite many wrong crosses, some of the right crosses were made as well. During those early years, I'd occasionally see Norton Zinder, my thesis adviser, in Washington. Each time, without fail, he'd shake his head and say: "I don't know how you're going to do it," referring to my attempts to clone the maize transposable elements. What, I kept wondering, does he know that I don't know? Well, I did succeed in the end, and the rewards of persisting have been enormous. McClintock's treasure box of mutants made it possible to make beautiful sense out of extraordinary molecular complexity. And plant molecular biology, of course, is now a thriving field. In time, Barbara forgave my early genetic clumsiness, and she followed the molecular developments with keen interest to the very end of her life, still able to participate and contribute until her last years.

I'd like to finish Barbara's story with a few lines written about her by Marcus Rhoades:

> One of the remarkable things about Barbara McClintock's surpassingly beautiful investigations is that they came solely from her own labors. Without technical help of any kind, she has by virtue of her boundless energy, her complete devotion to science, her originality and ingenuity, and her quick and high intelligence made a series of significant discoveries unparalleled in the history of cytogenetics. A skilled experimentalist, a master at interpreting cytological detail, a brilliant theoretician, she has had an illuminating and pervasive role in the development of cytology and genetics.

I think that says it all.

So that is my tale—or almost all of it. It has a wonderful personal postscript. Last November my appointment as Willaman Professor of Life Sciences at The Pennsylvania State University was announced in the Eberly College's alumni magazine, which published my picture and a nice accompanying story. Two days after the magazine was mailed out, I got a

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telephone call. The caller said simply: "My name is Jim Rathmell, and I think you're my mother." Jim, my second son, was adopted by a Penn State family—his adoptive father was an agriculture extension agent. Jim graduated from Penn State—the only one of four adopted siblings to attend university. He continued his studies, first doing research in biochemistry and eventually attending medical school. At the time of his phone call, he was an anesthesiologist on the faculty of the University of Vermont. Recently he began his new job as the director of the Pain Management Clinic at Brigham and Women's Hospital, one of the Harvard Medical School's teaching hospitals. His restless drive for excellence has to say something about the heritability of complex traits.

Maps

BRUCE GUERNSEY

Those who've been to war love maps.
They keep them everywhere: in pockets, drawers,
the glove box of cars and stacked by the toilet.
Maps are what they read, these poems for soldiers
who hear in the lines the whir of blades,
who smell in the colors the char of smoke.

They know the hidden meaning of rivers,
the true symbol of water, how dry a last breath—
that here, spread flat on the kitchen table,
are really mountains, the strategic home of gods.
For those such as these, myth is truth,
and this paper you touch, a metaphor for earth.

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Mon Général

The Case of Joseph Joffre

BARNETT SINGER

Military incompetence is a fascinating and important subject, and General Joseph Joffre, whose manicured image as savior of France in World War I long blinded interpreters, is a fine case in point. Some historians, especially English and American ones, began to take Joffre's war record to task during the 1950s and 1960s. B. H. Liddell Hart, so often prescient, had led the way, and then a later group—including A. J. P. Taylor, Alistair Horne, and Barbara Tuchman—informed readers about how disastrous Joffre was in the high positions he held. But their view—essentially, that Joffre was an empty-headed, peasant idiot—will not quite do either. The French general, in my view, had a severe character disorder: bluntly put, he was a selfish, self-promoting, credit-appropriating fraud. His character is the key to everything Joffre did in World War I and to his own self-aggrandizing conceptions of those actions.

Joffre's parents had eleven children, of whom Joseph-Jacques-Césaire was third oldest; but the two born before him died very early, leaving him as first hope of a rural family, in which the father and paternal grandfather were both coopers. Joseph grew up more comfortably than the usual "peasant" and became his parents' first prizewinner on a march upward through the Collège de Perpignan and Ecole Polytechnique. Simultaneously, he was a laconic provincial, ragged for his accent—the recipe for both superiority and inferiority feelings, fueling lifelong envy and unease in him.

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Like all narcissists, Joffre was a great collector (or stimulator) of flatterers, and testimony to his physical splendors, career abilities, and general character abounds. Here is a typical description of his reassuring wartime physique: "Big, with a large chest, voluminous head, a vast square forehead accentuated by the shaggy eyebrows [and] . . . a strong mustache." Another officer recalls Joffre of the Marne as nothing less than a Greek deity—"Atlas carrying the celestial vault on his shoulders."

Hagiographic treatments generally mention the luminous effect of Joffre's native Rivesaltes as a determinant for his character. Emile Ripert made a pilgrimage there and was carried off by its effect on the cooper's famous son. From the Pyrenees came, for example, Joffre's supposed humility. But let us give the floor to M. Ripert: "The wine of glory could not make the head grow big in a man who, from childhood, had absorbed the divine liqueur the sun provides the fields of Rivesaltes."

Admirers agree on Joffre's amazing calm, a quality that still finds its way into texts as a trait of his military ability. The diplomat Gabriel Hanotaux marveled at Joffre's serenity before the Marne, and Joffre's aide Jean Fabry extolled his sangfroid in the era of Verdun—not surprising, since he avoided battlegrounds. For Gabriel Terrail, Joffre was simply "master of his nerves." For Henry Bordeaux, he stood out by his placidity when others despaired.

In addition to this trait of calm, Joffre's panegyrists also praise his invariable optimism—in actuality, part of his lack of concern. During the worst war in history, he only shattered his

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habitual bonhomie when someone near him worried too much about disasters that never fazed the chief. To one who anxiously pointed out that the French army was heading for catastrophe, Joffre banged his fist on the table, replying, "And you, sir, don't you believe in France?" When another general had a bad night of worry, Joffre again banged on the table, cutting off his anxious interlocutor. "So, you too, you're like the others. When *I* tell you we *will* get them." The great General Gallieni was particularly disgusted by Joffre's repetition of the phrase "je les aurai," and Joffre's sanguinary offensives during the war broke his heart. Just before the Verdun holocaust, Joffre erupted yet again in response to his and another general's critiques of Verdun's defenses. At that point Minister of War and near death, Gallieni backed down.

Sycophants also placed much emphasis on Joffre's astonishing ability to maintain his routines. Someone who truly cared about the effects of the war would have been more peripatetic—leaving his Chantilly chef more often to visit fronts, a bun in hand, improvising. Not Joffre. As a schoolboy he had had a fine appetite, exults René Benjamin, and nothing in the war changed that. Emile Hinzelin noted that "his life is regulated with mathematical precision" and then provided the great man's menus before the Marne. Joffre's dinner for September 3, 1914, was leek soup, beef sautéed Lyonnais style, roast chicken, salami in butter, watercress salad, cheese, and fruit, and Benjamin called him "la première fourchette de l'armée"!

To do a good job, Joffre declared, one *had* to eat one's fill and rest properly. All through the period of Verdun, far from the slaughter, he went to bed at ten each night. When someone came to ask about the battle's progress, he received an invariable answer from aides: General Joffre is sleeping. Innumerable casualties, men screaming as gangrenous legs were lopped off without anesthetic—none of the horrifying litany could shake him. But then Joffre made sure to avoid not only battlefields, but also the inspection of hospitals.

When hagiographers had the good fortune to penetrate into the General's office, a simple, uncluttered environment again bespoke unvarying routine, which inspired paroxysms of hero worship. "It is here that *he* works, reflects, and commands," raved Adolphe Séché. An American visitor called him "a man of the type of Grant and Lincoln, sobered by responsibility, haunted by the nation's sorrows."

It remains difficult to understand how so many were taken in by all this, but then the character type of a man such as Joffre sedulously cultivates the surface impression he makes. How else could Anatole France remark that he was sparing of his men's blood, when the reverse was so obviously true? Or Louis Barthou, in a funeral oration, take at face value all the laudatory apothegms Joffre had vouchsafed his men during the war? How could so many see him as "Le Papa Joffre," savior of France?

Until the era of Horne, Tuchman, et al., too few thought seriously of questioning Joffre's war record. Liddell Hart, as noted, stands out for the 1920s and so does Emile Mayer, a Frenchman who had known Joffre since school days. Encountering him fifteen years after lycée, Mayer was less numinously reassured by his physique than the General's admirers cited: "He had become pasty, heavy, warped, asymmetrical," he comments. Mayer had real doubts before the war about a leader he deemed superficial, "this great indolent man," bearing a fictitious tangle of credentials.

As for Joffre's own writing as a clue to his self-conception, the only book that precedes his exasperating wartime recitations and then his war memoirs was really only a report titled *My March to Timbuctoo.* An engineer by training, Joffre was far less distinguished a colonial than Gallieni and Lyautey, two great proconsuls and future ministers of war. After the Franco-Prussian War, he worked on various projects at different garrison towns around France until the mid-1880s. Then in 1885 he went to Indochina as an engineer-captain, participating in the defense of Hanoi.

Returning to France, Joffre was given commands at different engineering regiments and a post in 1891 as professor of fortifications at Fontainebleau. In 1892 he was tapped for return to the colonial milieu in order to supervise the building of a railway in French West Africa. The next year he was asked to lead a supplementary column from Ségou in western Sudan 470 miles east to Timbuktu, extending French hegemony in the region. *My March to Timbuctoo* concerns that expedition. Joffre was to travel with his group on land, while a Colo-

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nel Bonnier led the main contingent on the Niger to the same destination. Bonnier's death and Joffre's capture of Timbuktu made his fame, and netted him a Legion of Honor into the bargain. But his report is non-revealing.

In Madagascar at the turn of the century, Joffre was still able to hide his true quality from Gallieni, a great colonial administrator who could usually evaluate characters decisively. The problem was that as Governor-General, Gallieni was too inundated with work to take proper measure of so comparatively unimportant a figure as Joffre, whose task was to build and fortify a naval base at the island's northern tip. In actuality he did quite little. But Joffre sent his chief long, self-congratulatory reports and, apparently, Gallieni was pleased by what he heard of his work at Diego-Suarez.

In 1903 Joffre went home to France to begin mounting a hierarchy of commands, then married for a second time, which deserves comment. His first wife, a widow six years older than he with two children, had died in pregnancy soon after their marriage. How real Joffre's supposed grieving through the 1880s was is open to doubt. But in 1897, as the acclaimed hero of Timbuktu, he was home to look up an early love lost to a rival. Henriette Penon, who wedded this rival, also had two children, and then, while married, took up with the freshly decorated Joffre. The future war leader's competitive streak shows clearly here. A third child was born to Henriette—whether it was Joffre's is unclear. But he *had* competed with a rival and helped destroy a marriage that took until 1905 (given the era) to end in divorce. Then he married Henriette, never doubting the paternity of his daughter, Germaine. He once said categorically: "She's a Plas," referring to the maiden name of his saintly mother. Undeniably, Joffre treated his daughter decently and Germaine was devoted to him. But no doubts or vulnerability? Apparently not.

Meanwhile, Joffre's career was now on an upward track, culminating in 1910 with a position on the Supreme War Council. Then came a large tragedy for France. Adolphe Messimy, the new War Minister, wanted a more energetic leader to replace General Michel, who as Chief of a reorganized General Staff, was hesitant about the new offensive dogma. Messimy's first choice was Gallieni, but that general felt a preponderantly colonial past would irritate metropolitan officers. Gallieni was also near the age of official retirement and felt loath to spite Michel. In the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair a candidate had to be politically correct, which doomed the next choice, General Pau, a fine, one-armed, but clerical officer. Messimy asked about a substitute and Gallieni mentioned Joffre, whom, alas, neither he nor Messimy knew well enough. With the exception of the Timbuktu campaign, Joffre had had no real experience of military leadership; yet his republican views and placid demeanor won him the job.

As war approached, Joffre relied on the ill-fated Plan XVII—one major offensive to go directly across Lorraine, another, lesser thrust through Alsace. Yet another on the left would affront the Germans in Luxembourg or the Belgian Ardennes, depending on their route of attack. General Michel had planned to defend France all along the Belgian border and Gallieni, too, felt that was necessary. But Joffre and his assistant De Castelnau gravely underestimated the possibility of a wide German advance through the heart of Belgium, as well as the strength of the forces committed to it. Joffre figured the advance would come through the more southerly Ardennes, which, ironically, happened one war later!

When hostilities began, the French commander's futile offensive in Lorraine was just what the German doctor ordered and was broken at immense cost to the French. The German end run through Belgium and down into France unfolded. Tardily, Joffre ordered a retreat south and was fortunate that the German General Moltke removed divisions from his right to fight in Belgium as well as against the Russians. Joffre was also fortunate that the Germans came across British resistance at Mons and Le Cateau. Still, the Germans were well ahead of schedule to get down to Paris, strangle it, then snare Joffre's troops from the rear in Lorraine. Nearing the capital, they got too cocky and decided to swing east early to execute that strategy. Meanwhile, during the retreat Joffre dismissed more than twenty generals, including Lanrezac, who had had the gall to figure things out well before his chief.

Typically, Joffre took credit for the inspired rebound at the Marne, which kept him in place as virtual Allied director of operations in

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the West for two more years. In fact, Gallieni was the true author of that victory. Just before leaving the War Ministry in late August 1914, Messimy had had the good sense to name him Military Governor and Commander of the Armies of Paris. It was an eleventh-hour move of real necessity. The Germans were hastening toward Paris, with Joffre's troops in retreat too far south (except for the many losing their lives in Lorraine). Immediately Gallieni, working around the clock, readied Paris for a possible incursion. His reports make a great contrast to Joffre's, in which empty generalities abound. Gallieni's are all specificity—on food, powder, fortifications, topography, air reconnaissance. From the last Gallieni noticed the German change of direction, offering the flank for a counterattack. Joffre replied to Gallieni September 3 that no such thing was possible. After Gallieni's repeated telephoning, Joffre finally climbed on board, later cooking earlier directives to make it look as if he had long foreseen the Marne. By an order of September 7, Gallieni rushed up the famous taxi cabs to reinforce troops and the victory took shape.

But Joffre's dallying made the Marne a lesser victory than it might have been. A key problem was that he had kept the British Commander John French too long in the dark. On September 8, the jealous Joffre also removed Maunoury's Sixth Army from Gallieni's control and then, on September 11, removed his ex-chief from any command role at a time when the German retreat might still have been well exploited. Instead the Germans were permitted to reach the Aisne River September 14 and hold a line there. The race to the sea that fall and a trench stalemate were the consequences; an unfettered Gallieni, with enough troops at his disposal, might have ejected the enemy at least from French territory. Using trains to skirt a foe on foot, even Joffre might have avoided the German occupation, not to mention his own suicidal offensives the following year. With a horrid autumn over, three hundred thousand French soldiers already dead, and trench lines in place, Joffre could only tell his charges in long-winded orders to try harder.

This delusional idiocy continued in 1915 and was heeded because of the prestige Joffre acquired from the Marne. He had drawn such credit from that victory that he had a virtual blank check for more misdirection of the war, supported by aides at General Headquarters sharing his monkish apartness from battle.

As one finishes volume 1 of Joffre's memoirs, one sees no mention of the copious casualties the French had sustained through the last few months of 1914 alone. But his unregenerate narrative for 1915 is even more scandalous. In Joffre's version, his offensives that year were good ideas ruined either by other people or by the elements. "On two occasions," he writes, "in the Argonne in May and in Champagne in the autumn, we failed by only a narrow margin to achieve very large results. If news of our preparations had not leaked out, if the fine weather had continued, if fleeting opportunities had been seized by local commanders, Heaven knows how far back we might have been able to drive the enemy."

Joffre retailed too many of these unfortunately accepted rationalizations, both during the war and in recollection. If he had an overarching plan in 1915, it was to breach the German line in two parts—roughly, Artois in the north and Champagne in the south. The First Battle of Champagne through the end of March 1915 became a series of lethally futile attacks, but Joffre pretended he was still honing techniques for the breakthrough. Meanwhile, the Germans were getting used to letting the French come through no-man's-land to take a first line of trenches, then pulverizing them from the second or third.

In the summer of 1915, Joffre conferred with the British, whom he dominated. Plans for another round of autumn offensives could *not* be called off, he warned. The seemingly good-natured Joffre was, fundamentally, a bully. So the British would soon lose their own thousands helping Joffre up the trench line at Loos, a gritty area of coalfields and slag heaps and, presently, corpses.

Blaming his own vast French losses in Champagne that September on heavy rain and wagging tongues, Joffre kept sermonizing a perishing generation about its moral attributes. Subordinates had to parrot such generalities. In the wake of the Champagne disasters a plethora of sycophantic reports poured into General Headquarters, and Joffre or an aide would approvingly blue-pencil the odd line. But there were a few courageous ones containing criticism. General Berthelot drew

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attention to such problems as friendly fire catching one's own troops from behind. A beautifully handwritten report by an infantry commander, Léon Méalin, noted that "one battalion cannot pierce several lines." Méalin was saying that *any* offensive of the type in Champagne or Artois was doomed, and he paid for his candor, losing his position soon after. Another general interpreted a recent attack as a needless massacre, executed in fog, with the enemy dug in behind "invisible networks" of barbed wire, and his own men anything but fresh because of cold, lack of rest, and other wretched conditions. Half the French troops were slaughtered in that engagement.

Fortunately, certain politicians now began to see Joffre for what he was, and one result was the appointment of a reluctant, ailing Gallieni as War Minister late in 1915. Distinguished British figures also felt they had been pressured, and even suckered, by Joffre. Some were put out by his hostility to the idea of a Dardanelles offensive, which, had it been executed early enough and with sufficient surprise, might have been an alternative to the Western stalemate.

Joffre might easily have fallen at the beginning of 1916, but then came the great German attack on Verdun. The French commander had allowed a war of attrition to work to enemy advantage, emboldening the Germans to try this coup de grâce. On August 5, 1915, he had put Verdun—just inside the German line and of historic significance—under his direct orders, and through the autumn removed a great amount of gunnery and men from it. And as usual, he punished people who disagreed with him. Verdun's governor tried to oppose some of these moves and was fired. In December, General Herr wrote a letter about Verdun's poor defenses and was later nearly executed for his candor! That December, Gallieni, the Minister of War, also heard of sloppy defenses, including a rotting trench network in the area. Writing Joffre about it, he received an insolent reply.

Meanwhile, Joffre ignored intelligence reports about an impending attack that streamed in even from German deserters. He would neither abandon Verdun and pull back the trench line nor prepare sufficiently for its defense. Only heavy rain kept the Germans from attacking a week earlier than their thunderous opening assault of February 21, 1916. Joffre, it seems, was now set to give up. But on February 24, an incensed Aristide Briand came to Chantilly, dragging Joffre from his sacred bed and demanding that Verdun be defended at all costs. French morale and Briand's ministry would be the casualties of abandonment. So Joffre rallied—too late. A key outer fort, Douaumont, was almost immediately handed to the enemy, later followed by the loss of Vaux. The seesaw effort to hold Verdun, persisting through spring, summer, and fall, killed much of what remained of the French army and pushed the remnant of a once-idealistic generation of soldiers toward mutiny.

What do Joffre's memoirs say about all this? Once again he feels he never made a mistake and seems to have discerned no real suffering either. His "duty," he says, was still to remain at Chantilly, "far from the scene of action," eating meals on time and getting his rest; for (the man being fond of empty apothegms), "The Battle of Verdun offers one more proof that in all the affairs of war nothing is more important than the way the command is exercised." The most moved he gets is remembering ceremonies that took place *after* the great slaughter—the conferral, for example, of a Legion of Honor on the entire town of Verdun (or what was left of it) in the fall of 1916. Pinning a medal on the retiring General de Langle also affected him. Sounding like something out of *Candide*, Joffre can only note German failure (how many prisoners and guns were taken), not the hundreds of thousands of his own annihilated troops. He sees Verdun as a simple test of nerves for all France that had been surmounted—an examination passed.

Naturally, Joffre took credit for the final victory and fudged on the concomitant tragedy of the Somme. When Field Marshal Haig became British commander in chief, Joffre won him over to the value of offensives, and then the Verdun holocaust forced him to hurry the British into an attack they were less than sure about. The date for the Somme became July 1, 1916. With several well-fortified lines, the Germans were dug in to a depth of forty feet and altogether prepared. British losses the first day were the greatest of any day of the war, numbering some twenty thousand dead. Joffre nonetheless congratulates himself for impelling Haig into such a useless massacre. Luckily

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for British troops, Joffre kept their commander's energy level up throughout. "During the whole month of August, I frequently called Sir Douglas Haig's attention to the necessity of putting more vigor and continuity into our attacks," recalls the well-fed, cheerleading Joffre. He neglects to mention that the exhausted Germans had put out peace feelers just before the Somme.

That fall it was nearly curtains for Joffre's direction of the war. In his memoirs, he naturally makes his dismissal sound like a major tragedy. Another offensive on the Somme for the spring of 1917 would certainly have finished off the Germans, in Joffre's account, but Parliament sabotaged him. Joffre blames it on the government watching the generals, and in a more gingerly way (owing to his colonial celebrity), on the new Minister of War, Lyautey. Then he savages his successor, General Nivelle, for a costly mistake on the Aisne in 1917 that would doubtless have been his own on the Somme. For "if we had had the firmness to renew and amplify the battle which the winter had interrupted [on the Somme], the Germans would have been crushed. . . . The men who saved them have a heavy responsibility to bear in the face of History." But not M. Joffre?

It is tempting to laugh at Joffre's reputed inability to read maps, his reluctance to check terrain, or the tardy award of steel helmets to his men. But what of the lack of care about suffering that all this betrays? What of his exaggerated emphasis on nonsensical wartime ceremonies? These ceremonies certainly flattered Joffre, for he loved to stick important people's images onto his own. How good King George of England was to him, King Albert of Belgium, too. Why, "the highest orders were bestowed on me by our Allies: Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, Cross of St. George, Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold, all of which, in my person brought honor to the whole of the French army."

Nonetheless, the great man *was* sacked on December 13, 1916, though the Ministry soon assuaged his wounded vanity by awarding him the ceremonial title of Marshal of France (December 27), the first created in nearly fifty years. In the spring of 1917, a temporarily broken Joffre would also find renewed validation on a mission to America, where he was sent to spread good will, as well as military intelligence (in his case a true oxymoron). He was accompanied by the politician René Viviani, three other officials, and five officers, including one who kept a slavish account of the trip. On board ship, "Marshal Joffre is, as always, calm, meditative, and smiling," part of which may have been owing to handsome remuneration—his normal French salary, a monthly indemnity of twenty thousand francs a month, and a generous expense account for food. Joffre would also be remunerated by a veritable Niagara of American testimonials. In his French exposés on the art of war at West Point or in responses to detailed questions that President Wilson posed May 9 through an interpreter at the White House, Joffre could not have imparted much that was useful. But the American heart—both press and people—enthusiastically went out to him. Cheered everywhere by thick crowds, wined, dined, and paraded with mayors, university presidents, and labor leaders, buttered up by dailies in each city he visited ("Joffre Captures Chicago," read a typical headline), awarded honorary degrees, compared to such figures as Washington, lionized and even idolized, why would Joffre even consider revising his conception of himself?

Back in France, Joffre continued to send letters of advice to American leaders. In June 1917, General Pershing met with him, admiring his reputation but not appreciative of the fact that "a sort of tutelage [was] contemplated, which also made it objectionable." At Chaumont in mid-October, Joffre inspected American troops and vouchsafed much patronizing advice, mostly unheeded.

In 1918, he received a fresh apotheosis by election to the Académie française, where only the novelist Paul Bourget dared pick at the legend, remarking: "So, Marshal, you're still winning the Battle of the Marne?" To which Joffre replied with ersatz humility: "I know nothing of that, but what gives me pleasure is that it *was* won . . . "

In the *après-guerre* era, Joffre made the rounds at banquets for war-wounded and inaugurations of monuments for the dead. Louis Madelin once asked him if he had had any doubts before the Marne, and the man who had to be persuaded by Gallieni to undo his retreat replied, "Never." He likened the engagement to Timbuktu, never doubting that "the little soldiers of France" would do as

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well at the Marne as his colonial regiment had done in Africa. There were still no clouds in Joffre's sky.

In 1920, the celebrated trencherman began a series of official voyages to European countries for more dinners and acclamations. In 1921, President Millerand called on him to spread his magic to the Far East and he embarked on another flood of receptions, re-doing his Marne routine and getting much mileage from it.

Joffre's post-war correspondence was enormous. From around France and the world came congratulatory letters, requests for pictures and autographs, help with widows' or war-wounded pensions, or recommendations. He lived a comfortable life, dividing his time between Paris in winter and a summer retreat at Louveciennes. He would go to the Ecole militaire or to meetings of the Académie, but worked mostly on correspondence or at dictating his memoirs.

One reason the number of letters crescendoed in 1926 was Joffre's position that year as president of the Committee for Relief of the Franc. In textbooks one reads of Raymond Poincaré "saving the franc," but the use of Joffre's name to get financial contributions is little known. Subscriptions to the fund for amortizing the French debt poured in, not only from many French, young and old, but from all around the world. People gave up days, even weeks of their salary for this cause. In letters or poems enclosed with contributions, one discovers profuse references to the Victor of the Marne. Joffre's replies were generally form letters, but his missive of June 4, 1926, to an official of Paramount in Paris not only thanked the company for its money, but noted how much "I enjoyed seeing again the nice film of the 'Châtelaine du Liban'!"

Such accolades that he received could not have hurt the old general. But a leg amputation, followed by a coma, led to his death on January 3, 1931. Joffre had been a marvel at self-publicity but less effective at caring about actual people in mortal danger, and he remained unregenerate to the end. Again, it is best to see him neither as the great man too many once thought he was *nor* as a mere peasant fool, in the manner of Liddell Hart, Horne, or Tuchman. Better, I think, to view him as someone whose character made him dangerous in high position, a man who plunged many innocents into a needless pool of death and who suffered no remorse for it at all.

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Sidney

London, 1987

MARK MADIGAN

I remember his laughter,
how he'd tell me I wasted
the best part of the day—

the first few hours
after day breaks—
so tonight, after writing,

though both eyes burned
from too much caffeine
and squinting in the glare

of a small dim light,
I took his advice
and walked the dark streets

of the old Roman city,
watching as the dawnlight
cast its first glow

over the slate roofs
of a city
not yet annoyed

by the frost-coated windows
of each parked car
or the slippery walkways

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leading to the doors.
  And, slowly, as the sun
    began to shimmy up,

and the city turned again
  to its rhythms of hot tea,
    shaving, and newspapers

folded on a sink's edge
  while the showers steamed,
    I stood, for a moment,

in St. James Park,
  to conjure some words
    frail as the spray

of my own warm breath,
  and offered the smallest
    but sincerest of thanks

for the frost warming up,
  for the glistening tears
    of near pure joy

that I found, this morning,
  winking in the curling
    eyelash of the grass.

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Honorable Thugs?

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN: THE BOSKET FAMILY AND THE AMERICAN TRADITION OF VIOLENCE. *By Fox Butterfield. Knopf. $27.50.*

EUGEN WEBER

We all descend from the past, Fox Butterfield reminds us in the prologue of his fascinating and depressing book. Pud, a syphilitic moonshine runner, begat James, a robber, who begat Butch, first arrested at the age of eight for robbing a woman at gunpoint, who begat our protagonist, Willie, who started out at six years old by trying to nobble an aged woman. Clearly, the old saw about killing the father does not hold. For Butterfield's heroes, it's all a matter of going the father one worse.

The tale begins in "Bloody Edgefield," a South Carolina county noted for its romantic, dashing statesmen, orators, soldiers, adventurers, daredevils, and its equally romantic violence, disorder, lawlessness, massacres, and counter-massacres. Preston Brooks, the congressman who caned Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts half to death, came from Edgefield; Brooks's cousin, Francis Pickens, the great slave owner and secessionist senator before he became governor of South Carolina, lived in Edgefield; and so did Ben Tillman, the populist and Negrophobe governor, then senator, of the state, who boasted that he would stick Grover Cleveland with a pitchfork. It was a good provenance for men of honor.

The Boskets or Bausketts also lived in Edgefield, first as slaves (they adopted the family name of their master), then as freedmen; and later in Saluda, a county carved out of the northern part of Edgefield, where, in Ben Tillman's day, the homicide rate was 35 per 100,000—higher than that of New York City in 1992. It seems to have always been thus: a dark and bloody ground. The eighteenth century had seen constant fighting, looting, and killing. The nineteenth century saw no less. In the early 1800s, Butterfield tells us, the murder rate in rural South Carolina appears to have been four times that of urbanized, industrialized Massachusetts. By 1878 it sounds a good deal higher. That year, the three Southern states of South Carolina, Kentucky, and Texas counted between 12.2 and 28.8 murders per 100,000, when Massachusetts racked up 1.4, and New York less than 7 per 100,000.

Butterfield attributes this in large part to the early influx of Scotch-Irish settlers, whom Benjamin Franklin described as white savages. Bold, touchy, brutal, they could also be generous; they were certainly reckless and violent. "Honor does not calculate risks," and honor was their compelling passion. Hospitable and gracious when circumstances were right, they were, above all, irascible and pugnacious. Honor meant reputation: the opinion that others hold of your manliness, your readiness to stand up for yourself. "An honorable man did not submit; he took swift action." Exacerbated by a weak legal system, by slavery (Edgefield was also the land where "King Cotton" was coined), and by chronic fears of servile insurrection, this produced explosive characters that Civil War and emancipation rubbed raw.

The war over—but then, the past is never past!—violence and aggression no longer ran in one direction only, and that made race relations more dire. Blacks, more or less free, preyed on one another and sometimes on

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whites. Benjamin Mays, "one of the few African-Americans from Edgefield in that era who received an education," remembered that "Negroes in my county fought among themselves because they were taking out on other Negroes what they really wanted but feared to take out on whites." Perhaps. And perhaps, also, because Negroes were more accessible. At any rate, blacks were no more noble outlaws than the whites: they robbed and killed whomever they could, mostly their own.

What was a good deal worse, blacks, even when law-abiding, were getting uppity—as well they might; and whites resented it, as well *they* might. Whites lynched uppity blacks or killed them outright and got away with it. The difference between law and lawlessness had always been fuzzy in South Carolina. It became fuzzier still, and almost meaningless to a lot of blacks. Whites showed little respect for courts; blacks distrusted and hated them. Whites could hope to manipulate the law; blacks knew that it would be used against them. It came down to the same thing: law was not justice. Justice was what you did for yourself; and blacks, now, had access to this sort of justice, too.

Born after slavery had ended, Pud (for pudding) Bosket was bold and tough, a man you did not cross. When one of the young man's in-laws, John Bennett, attacked his brother (the brother had been maltreating his own wife, Bennett's sister), Pud threw him against a barn, "so hard the barn fell right down." "Don't step on my reputation," Pud said to Bennett. "My name is all I got, so I got to keep it. I'm a man of respect." Butterfield stipulates that such violence was not simply pathological. It grew out of the old white Southern code of honor: an extreme sensitivity to insult and the opinion of others.

Butterfield is right, but he does not go back far enough, to the Scotch-Irish whom he introduced at the beginning, or to any society where law is short and threats are legion. In a climate of endemic aggression, in the Middle Ages, say, in Iceland of the sagas, in Arabia, in Sicily, or in parts of France in quite modern times, letting one person take advantage encourages others to do as much, and that is bad for your property, and your security, too. Blacks were now free—meaning constrained—to do what white Southerners had been doing and went on doing, because they lived in communities where the state had only imperfectly succeeded in confiscating the monopoly of violence and vengeance. Exercising violence and vengeance on one's own behalf is what honor is about. White Southerners and their black imitators had to conform or suffer.

Pud Bosket conformed. By 1924, he was the baddest man in Saluda. Then, one day, when he was thirty-five years old, he died together with his white railway section boss in an automobile accident, on the road back from the bootlegger they patronized. He had, Butterfield tells us, been as bold, as reckless, as self-destructive as the cavaliers of the antebellum South. And, clearly, as conformist. Now the men in the Bosket family would try to live down to his standards.

In 1930, in search of work, Pud's widow, James's mother, moved to Augusta, Georgia. On the blocks where she lived between 1930 and 1941 (like a lot of the poor, the family did a good deal of moving), half to two-thirds of black households were headed by women. "It's just the way it was, womens without mens." There was, as I mentioned, no call to kill the father. Absence makes the heart grow prouder. James reminded people of Pud, and, if they did not recognize the features, they backed away at the sound of his name. It made him feel good: "When I grow up, I'm going to be a bad man, just like my father."

The Boskets were poor, the Boskets were bad, the Boskets did not give a damn. James baked the cat to death in the oven, and all cackled about it. He had mechanical skills, he got jobs but did not keep them; he was irresponsible, violent, wild, especially when he drank, which he did a lot; he was "cruel and abusive" to his wife. Then he moved away, to a life of petty armed robberies, and, when the wife went off in turn, Butch, their son, was left to be brought up by his grandmother, who was out most of the day, at work.

Abandoned by his father, then by his mother, Butch was smart, but "felt a compulsion to show off by breaking the rules. He had been neglected and rejected . . . and he burned with an inner rage. Skipping school was a way to demonstrate anger." In my day, it was a way to demonstrate joie de vivre; but Butterfield may be right. It is not necessarily demonstrated that frustration early in life drives you to delinquency. It may drive you to more conventional and more profitable forms of competitiveness—as it does, for example,

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the daughters of North African families living in France, who perceive success in school as an avenue of escape from family and ghetto, as an opportunity for social mobility and promotion.

Humans are animals that learn, that learn to learn and learn to teach. Education, as the term implies, is a bringing out and an enhancement of characteristics that fit us to operate in society. In the absence of traditional education in the home and at school, it is the street that teaches what must be learned. Butch learned the lessons of the streets, where the first law was survival, and survival depended on readiness to fight in order to secure respect and recognition. He fought a bigger boy and won. "Now people know me, and they know I don't take no shit from nobody." He learned to react instinctively, or perhaps he did not have to learn. In the jungle, there was no time to think; reflection could be dangerous to your health. In Harlem, where the eight-year-old rejoined his mother in 1950, he bullied younger boys and forced himself upon them sexually.

Butterfield thinks that the truculent, belligerent exterior that the boy developed covered inner fears; in this view, Butch hid his rage and terror behind a front of hostility and aggression. Yet a front of hostility and aggression may simply represent a fount of hostility and aggression. We really have no way of knowing. The father, whom the boy admired for his criminal exploits and for his time in prison, beat him viciously and often. Soon Butch was shuttling between euphemistically named reform schools and mental hospitals. Psychiatrists at Bellevue found him seething with anger—sullen, hostile, a bomb waiting to explode; and they related this to his overwhelming loneliness, great need to be loved and have someone to love. Prison psychiatrists, later, would repeat these views. In his teens, he had become a carnivorous predator, and he boasted about it: "I have been a wild animal all my life." Butterfield refers to the "early background that was not his fault." Is it ever?

At any rate, in the street as in reform school, in hospital as in prison, the maladjusted man adjusted very well. By manipulation, intimidation, and violence, he took what he wanted or, at least, what he could. "You either exploited someone else, or they exploited you." In jail, as in the street, truculence, wariness, and readiness to fight were keys to survival. Impulses were meant not to be controlled but followed. He followed his, he committed murder, he was sent to prison. He was twenty-one.

Butch in jail lost none of his violence, but he earned a college degree. In January 1980, the University of Kansas awarded him the bachelor of arts degree "with highest distinction." Two months later, having graduated in the top 3 percent of his class, he became the first (and so far the last) prison inmate to be elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He certainly thought clearly. One day, discussing capitalism with his sociology instructor, he voiced views that better-known social critics express less trenchantly: "Just line the motherfuckers up and kill them." In late 1984, after a score of years behind bars, he was released on parole, found a good job and an adoring girlfriend. Incapable of affection, irremediably callous, contemptuous of women as of "fuckboys," he *had* to rape the woman's small daughter while the mother watched. Within two months of release he was back in prison, botched an attempted escape, was cornered, killed the mistress who had tried to get him out, and then himself. Pondering the news of Butch's death, Jeremiah Cameron, a professor of English and leader of the NAACP in Kansas City, came to think that maybe it was for the best.

Though they are often a nuisance, we have learned to aspire to law and order and to expect their comforts. Butterfield reminds us that their fragile reign is of recent date. In the light of history, what we took for a norm may be a flash in the pan. Murder rates in medieval England were probably ten times as high as they are today. Most people carried staves, everyone carried a knife (what else would you use to eat?), violence settled disputes when courts were slow, expensive, and corrupt. Gradually, painfully, after 1500 the state campaigned to take violence and vengeance unto itself alone. After 1700, a variety of pressures worked to control impulse, moderate recklessness, inculcate discipline and self-discipline. By 1800, Amsterdam, which had known 47 homicides per 100,000 at mid-fifteenth century, counted just over one a year. In Philadelphia, where, in the 1850s, the murder rate had been 4 per 100,000, it fell to half that by the century's end. It was slow work, but sensibility and security pressed forward. Blacks, however, as Butterfield writes, "largely shut out of jobs

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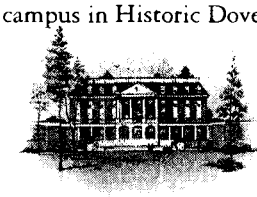

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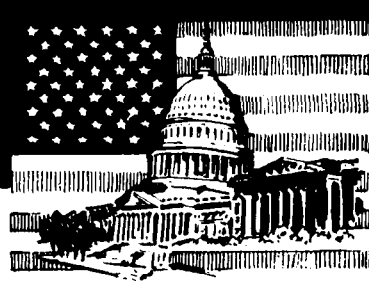

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in the industrial economy . . . did not share in its new values." Isolated by discrimination, unemployment, bad schools, and unsafe neighborhoods, he explains, they could not aspire to the dignity of equals, only to whatever "respect" they imposed by force.

Could be. Yet Jeremiah Cameron, whom we just encountered, had "been poor and black" before he became the first African-American elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Indiana University. And when in 1962 Butch murdered a pawnbroker in Milwaukee, the two detectives who found him were both blacks "who had been born in poverty in Arkansas and had come to Milwaukee as teenagers." If abuse and neglect make you callous and anti-social, how is it that so many have managed to transcend their wounds? How far are we determined? Laura, Butch's wife, the offspring of free blacks, seems to have had a happy childhood in Harlem and, though she never knew her father, had a concerned and sympathetic mother. Yet we are told that "lack of a father left its mark."

Could Butterfield be looking less for explanations, for which data are lacking, than for excuses? At any rate, Laura got herself pregnant in eleventh grade, and Willie James Bosket, Butch's son, was born in December 1962.

Laura blamed the neighborhood for the way he grew up; "There was people out there doing things. . . . " There was indeed, and Willie soon decided that he would do like them. "You earn respect by being the baddest, toughest person on the block, always ready to use violence to assert your superiority." By the time he was eight years old, in second grade, Willie was being called a crazy nigger—high praise on the street. On many streets, indeed, across the world. *Loco* reflects appreciation of battling qualities; Pierrot le Fou was a notorious Parisian gang leader; James Butler Hickock is better remembered as Wild Bill Hickock. A crazy nigger was someone who developed a reputation for being unpredictably violent and aggressive, a sort of berserker for our times. Berserkers, too, useful and feared in battle, were not to be trusted even by their friends. That was Willie's problem. Like his forebears, the boy, then the young man, was not very big: 5 feet 9 inches, about 150 pounds, with lively eyes, bright smile, infectious enthusiasm. He was good with his hands and, Butterfield informs us, had an IQ breaching the genius level. Evidently, he could control his berserker side when he wanted, taking his time about wreaking revenge after a slight, lulling people into perilous inattention before erupting into unexpected action. So he was not, or not always, the prey of great dark inner tides. Just as evidently, he indulged his wildness.

Between the age of nine, when he was first sent to reform school, and fifteen, Willie had claimed two thousand crimes, including two hundred armed robberies and twenty-five stabbings. He may have counted running stop signs; he may have exaggerated for effect and self-aggrandizement. But we know that, at fifteen, he shot and killed two men on a Manhattan subway and that in prison he stabbed a guard whom he had never seen before—presumably for diversion. Violence, comments Butterfield, "was like a sport, a competition, and victory went to the most violent." Elation must have been brief. "I shot people, that's all. . . . I don't feel nothing."

Willie was made for the system, and the system allowed him to take advantage: fumbling court and supervisory structures, overloaded, undersupported, overworked, pulled in several directions by laws, regulations, directives, pressure groups. The criminal justice system, so called, was about rehabilitation, jails were about penitence, boys' jails were about reform. Neither reformatories nor penitentiaries achieved much rehabilitation, but the myth ground on. Kids especially were basically good and could be turned round by stern care or mild (opinions differed). For the young, theft, threats, arson, assault, rape led to juvenile court. Even if arrested for robbery, a youth of fourteen or below was "not criminally responsible . . . by reason of infancy." Compassion, firm but fair, should find answers to his problems. One psychiatrist who saw Willie at Bellevue, first when he was eight, then when he was eleven, felt that what he needed was a humanizing experience. But humans are beasts who can, with hard work and luck, be tamed and trained out of their beastliness. For Willie at eleven, and perhaps even at eight, it was too late for training.

In 1978, the Juvenile Offenders' Act allowed children as young as thirteen to be tried in criminal court for murder and to face the same penalties as adults. That same year, Willie, sixteen, promoted himself to murder, was caught, tried, and cast into an outer dark-

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ness where he fit as snugly as in the streets he left. Convicted of murdering two Hispanic men and of attempted assault against an elderly black, Willie interpreted his incarceration as part of a centuries-old white racist plot to enslave black people. He felt sorry for himself and, with more or less reluctance, Butterfield feels sorry for him, too, because he finds him "as heedless and self-destructive as the zealous white patriarchs of old Edgefield who fought for honor. Willie went into combat for respect."

Butterfield evinces no sympathy for the zealous white patriarchs of old Edgefield, and I don't blame him a bit. I understand less why his mind goes out to Willie who, he tells us, could have been out of jail within a few years if he stayed out of trouble, but who went to war against prison and guards not for respect, but to assert himself and have a bit of fun. "I'm going to be the worst fucking nightmare the Department of Correctional Services ever had to deal with." He was. Butterfield describes him, or rather quotes the prison authorities describing him, as the most violent criminal in New York State history: a real-life Hannibal Lecter. And Butterfield knows that it was Willie who decided how things were to go. "There was no more challenge, no fun in getting along so well with his jailers." New York's lack of a death penalty offered endless opportunities to taunt and assault the guards. So, now, Willie moves around chained, manacled, pinioned, while the front of his cell is sheathed in Plexiglas to foil his habit of throwing excrement at his guards.

Fox Butterfield concludes that it is "too late for Willie to redeem himself. He could only live out the fatal tradition of violence that had made its way from rural South Carolina to the poor streets of the city." Quite so. But what about the wild and woolly Scotch-Irish, acid fruit of a thousand years of poverty and violence? Was their tradition fatal for them? Is it for Italians, Corsicans, Sicilians, or, indeed, for blacks, some of whom are gangsters, agreed, but more of whom are bankers, grocers, schoolteachers, and mechanics?

One must admire the author's sensitivity, empathy, understanding for his protagonists, and the way he places their doings in a context. And he is entitled to his prejudices, as long as we can see how they affect the text. Butterfield is understandably against the judicial system whose victims he thinks (or perhaps feels) are those who commit crimes, not those against whom crimes are committed. History, society, and the system trap people like the Boskets, make them fall into the grip of police and law and law courts. Willie agrees: "I look at myself as a perfect example of a black man being persecuted in a white America . . . by a system that has some very poisonous claws. And once those claws set in your neck, it's very hard to get them out."

Butch and Willie are presented as articulate and seductive, which makes them interesting and, to me, confusing because their nasty, unpleasant aspects are less well brought out. To read Butterfield, his subjects are victims of the past, of the present, of racism, above all of a flawed variant of honor inherited from their one-time masters. Yet their relation to honor and its codes, even as blemished as these might have been in the South, is limited to those brutal and self-serving aspects that made Peter Gay describe honor as simply one alibi for aggression. The wider, more attractive aspects of honor—duty, loyalty, comradeship, trust—are beyond these men, and so, to a large degree, are the elementary obligations that honor implies when it guides, constrains, if only for convention's sake.

Butterfield's protagonists seem driven less by single-heartedness than by fatuity and sporadic impulse. Moved by forces that are probably beyond their control, and certainly less explicable than Butterfield seems to think, Butch and Willie, like their forebears, are bullies who want to do what they want when they want, explode if thwarted, tend to whine when they can't win. And their activities seem governed less by Pud's practical interest in respect than by incontinent arrogance. Anachronistic vestiges of honor do not, as Butterfield claims, move hereditary thugs like these. They simply provide the author with elegant explanations and an original narrative structure. But explanations that serve as extenuations solve no problems, except perhaps the problems of those who think them up.

Willie's story about himself is about growing up poor in Harlem, about abuse and emotional neglect, about sloshing around a chaotic juvenile system. He is bitter about what he calls his surrogate mother, the criminal justice system that raised him and made him "a monster created by the system he now haunts." This self-serving view attributes too much

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credit to the system, too little to individual will. As for racism—whose brutal injustices blacks can no more ignore than Jews have done, or Chinese, or Japanese, or, not long ago, the Irish—it is a horrid fact. Yet many blacks have conquered racism and risen above it as Jews have, and Japanese. Whites, on the other hand, have also founded criminal dynasties for whose perpetuation interpreters have found other excuses, equally plausible though no more convincing. Many sensible people are indeed racist—about the human race. But sensible people are indifferent to the shades involved.

Once, when a social worker suggested that Willie needed psychiatric care (he got a lot of it, and much good it did him!), Laura, his mother, rejoined: "He's not crazy. He's just plain bad, like the rest of the kids out there." Not all the kids, certainly. But could there be, "out there," a criminal class recruited by inheritance, cooption, and mutual recognition, a nether world of Morlocks with its own culture and rules, engaged in running battles with the society they reject while claiming that it rejected them, with "the system" that gets in their way, and with one another as they compete for prey? And could it be that we cannot accept that there are problems we are condemned to face without solution?

Those who are labeled anti-social, and who are mostly young, are actually quite well adjusted to the society in which they move and where, often, they chose to make their living. Prison, as an extension of everyday experience, has little effect on them. Butterfield refers to it as more like a rite of passage. He adds that the cost of running the nation's prison, probation, and parole system, $4 billion in 1975, is now close to $50 billion a year. For the $75,000 a year that it costs to keep a juvenile in New York's Division of Youth, we could send three students to Harvard. In California, meanwhile, the steadily rising costs of expanding prisons come in good part from the reduced budget of state universities and colleges.

Sensibly, Butterfield offers few suggestions. He knows that young American men slaughter one another and a lot of non-combatants at horrendous rates: ten times higher than in Italy, sixty times higher than in England. He attributes anti-social personalities, like those that he has traced with so much talent and perseverance, above all to neighborhood and parents. He points out, quite reasonably, that being a parent is *not* a natural instinct and that inadequate parents, black, green, or of the tinge that Aldous Huxley described as pinko-grey, place children at risk and the community, too. He proposes that we might start licensing parents the way we license drivers.

Butterfield has written a very moving book and a very readable one. His is an amorality tale that fits our present disconsolate mood about insoluble quandaries. Since modern hygiene cut the death rates of criminogenic age and social groups, since reassuring hypocrisies have been devalued and social cement has been chipped away, since two-job families thin out family cohesion and ill-house-trained parents have given up house-training their offspring, wildness is all the rage. In February 1995, a rapper called Tupac Shakur (2Pac) was sentenced to one and a half to four years in prison for sexual assault. In April 1995 his new album, "Me Against the World," sold two million copies and topped the charts. In October 1995, his case on appeal, 2Pac was released on bail, and he signed with Death Row Records, described as the main man of gangsta rap on the West Coast. Within months, he brought out a new album that boasts about the life of a boss player, awash in money, intoxicants, and eager women, ready to guard his gains against competitors. Arms, retaliation, bleeding victims: "My world is a war zone," he raps. Willie too may find a way to combine felony and fame.

I don't know about honor; but violence pays. If we really are *all* God's children, we're surely the creatures of a capricious God.

The People's William

GLADSTONE. *By Roy Jenkins. Macmillan. £20.*

Reviewed by EDWARD LIPMAN

A former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Roy Jenkins is better known these days for producing what seems like an endless stream of big

✪ EDWARD LIPMAN is a Research Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and has contributed to *Commentary* as well as such British publications as *Parliamentary Brief* and the *Evening Standard.*

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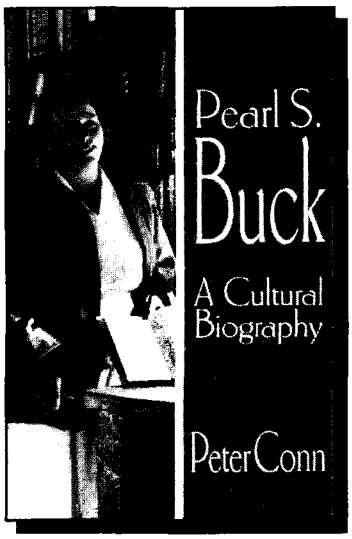

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books on a wide variety of subjects. Now he has turned his attention to Gladstone. While the spectacle of a former politician writing serious books on a subject other than his own political career is as attractive as it is rare, serious books are not by definition necessarily significant. And it is here that Jenkins's *Gladstone* falls down: it is, alas, a work that will neither interest the scholar nor entertain the general reader.

Gladstone presents a promising subject. There exists for Gladstone no relatively recent, full-length, scholarly biography of the sort that Robert Blake gave us for Disraeli back in the 1960s; it is now more than forty years—and at least two generations of productive scholarship—since the appearance of the one-volume life of Gladstone by Philip Magnus. The long-delayed second volume of Richard Shannon's Gladstone biography, which would carry the story from 1865 to Gladstone's death, now seems unlikely to appear at all. The two volumes of essays on Gladstone by H. C. G. Matthew provide a useful accompaniment to, but not a replacement for, a more strictly biographical treatment.

Gladstone's career is also of the greatest historical interest. He either held high office or was important in opposition for most of Queen Victoria's very long reign. A highly intelligent man, he was immensely well read and complemented his famous parliamentary oratory with voluminous publications, more often intellectual than political in nature.

Where, then, has Jenkins gone wrong? The chief problem is one of sources. Jenkins has written his book, as he himself admits, from published sources. The nature of the published sources in the case of Gladstone is perhaps unique among major Victorian politicians. Along with hundreds of books on Gladstone and Victorian politics in general, we now have in published form Gladstone's own diaries. Fourteen volumes, carefully edited over a period of decades by M. R. D. Foot and H. C. G. Matthew, these trace Gladstone's progress through decade after decade of near daily entries, from his years as a schoolboy until his death.

And so it is that Jenkins's *Gladstone* relies for its material on the secondary literature, on the one hand, and on the published Gladstone diaries, on the other. Gladstone's diaries are, unfortunately, rather like a modern Filofax. They contain an endless stream of appointments kept, books read, books written, dinners attended . . . and so on. Of political commentary and revealing autobiography there is little.

The only revelations contained in the diaries involve Gladstone's odd late-night wanderings around the more seedy parts of London, wanderings on which he made it a practice to engage prostitutes in conversation—ultimately, it appears, with a view to reclaiming their lost souls. Gladstone often went home and scourged—flagellated—himself after these tempting excursions. A great deal of "scholarly" debate on these activities has concluded that he probably never did anything but speak with any of these ladies of the night. Jenkins can be commended for devoting little space to Gladstone's nocturnal excursions. Until someone demonstrates that Gladstone's efforts at the reclamation of the fallen had anything at all to do with his politics, the subject is of interest only to those readers whose minds, as they say, never sleep.

By relying heavily on the *Diaries* as his principal—indeed only—archival source, Jenkins's biography wobbles between rather dry narrative accounts of Gladstone's political career and quite trivial details about his personal life. A few such details might have served to set the scene, but in repetitious profusion they serve only to bore. A biography that availed itself of the richness of the archival material on Victorian political history would more easily have sustained a vivid texture that drew the reader into the narrative.

Scholars—or for that matter anyone desiring to find out more about any particular aspect of Gladstone's life and career—will be let down by the paltry footnotes, which seem random. Few of the events this reviewer wished to check in the footnotes had any footnotes to check them against. Surprisingly, given Jenkins's admiration for Gladstone, he fails to take Gladstone seriously as an intellectual and generally plays down the intellectual aspects of Victorian political life. A pity, since the intellectual depth of Victorian politics is perhaps the main reason the period is so interesting.

Jenkins addresses the historical debate about Gladstone only obliquely. If one knows the scholarly debates well, one can pick up where Jenkins joins battle on various issues.

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But Jenkins never makes clear against whom he is arguing. He only rarely mentions any other historians in the text, and, as a consequence, his arguments take on the appearance of shadowboxing against absent opponents.

It is sometimes said that no biographer ever finishes his work without coming to admire his subject, even in instances where the intentions of the biographer were originally far from hagiographic. Perhaps this is true; nonetheless, it would be nice to have at some point a biography of Gladstone that was not ultimately a long panegyric. Jenkins's biography, I fear, suffers from this more than most; to him, Gladstone was "the quintessential Victorian: and "the greatest of Britain's Prime Ministers," though this last Jenkins claims to say "with hesitancy."

Few would argue with the proposition that Gladstone was certainly *one* of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers. Whether he was "the quintessential Victorian" is far more open to doubt, and it is on this point that one wishes that Jenkins might have been more cynical. To accept Gladstone as "the quintessential Victorian," two things have to be proven. First, that the quintessential Victorian was a Liberal who upheld liberalism. Second, that Gladstone's liberalism was representative. Neither premise is self-evident.

Gladstone had little to do with the stream of political thought and practice that has latterly come to be known as Victorian Liberalism. More representative practitioners were Palmerston and Russell, from whom Gladstone kept his distance whenever possible. Although he came to lead a Liberal Party that contained the liberalism of Palmerston and Russell, Gladstone tore the party asunder over Irish Home Rule in 1886. After the split that ensued, Gladstone was left with a rump that was anything but representative of the Liberalism that had formerly been its chief doctrine, consisting in large measure of social radicals, Nonconformists, atheists, and temperance reformers.

The liberalism that Palmerston and Russell developed was above all a manly, "national" liberalism. Not only did it uphold the union, but it had patriotic, nationalist elements that under Gladstone's tenure were all but appropriated by the Conservative Party from Disraeli onwards. And this legacy, as Jonathan Parry has recently pointed out in his brilliant *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, is important in explaining why the "Conservative (and Unionist) party has been the dominant political force of twentieth-century Britain." Hence by the time of Disraeli's premiership in 1874 and after Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule in 1886, the Conservative Party had become more reflective than the Liberal Party of the temper of the age.

A good example of this is to be found in Gladstone's involvement in the so-called "Don Pacifico" affair of 1850. David "Don" Pacifico was a Spanish Jew who, by virtue of his birth in Gibraltar, was entitled to and had assumed British nationality. His house in Athens had been pillaged by a Greek mob, and he claimed compensation from the Greek government. In coming to his support, Palmerston, as foreign secretary, proclaimed what was to become famous as the doctrine of "Civis Romanus sum": the idea that a British citizen, wherever he might find himself in the world, was entitled to the full protection of Her Majesty's Government.

Putting might behind his words, Palmerston ordered a blockade of the Greek coast and sparked off a diplomatic incident embroiling Russia, Austria, and France—an incident of sufficient gravity to involve the withdrawal of the French ambassador from London. Gladstone weighed in against Palmerston in the House of Commons, asking whether Palmerston makes "the claim for us that we are uplifted upon a platform high above the standing-ground of all other nations." The duty of a foreign secretary, as Gladstone saw it, was "to conciliate peace with dignity" and "to exalt in honor among mankind, that great code of principles which is termed the law of nations."

Such a doctrine is not by any stretch of the imagination one that might be termed "representative" of politics in the Victorian period. The mantle of foreign policy thrown down by Palmerston on his death was to be picked up by Disraeli and captured for the Conservatives. Gladstonian moralism may have a happy resonance for liberals today, but it was more of a minor current than a major stream in Victorian England. It is true that, in the 1880 election campaign, Gladstone made Disraeli's foreign policy a major issue in his winning campaign. Yet careful analysis suggests that Gladstone's victory owed more to the severe,

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worldwide depression that developed in the mid-1870s than to any popular revulsion against Disraeli's policies. Even in his personal life, Gladstone is more an exception than the rule. As a devout, confessing, and believing Anglican, Gladstone stood alone among leading Liberals; and even in the Victorian era, contrary to what one might think, his private religiosity was a great anomaly among the governing classes.

Nor is Gladstone even the high-minded tribune of the people that Jenkins often suggests. While accomplished at captivating audiences, he remained—in his own words—an "out and out inegalitarian" and a "firm believer in the aristocratic principle—the rule of the best" until the end of his days. Gladstone supported the South in the Civil War—claiming that Jefferson Davis had "made a nation"—until it became clear they were going to lose.

For those who would like to learn something fresh about Gladstone, then, Jenkins's work will not be of much use. It is much to be regretted that Richard Shannon seems unlikely to bring out the second volume of his Gladstone life, for the first volume was a model of what scholarly biography can be—lucid, compelling, and readable. Yet in a sense, the first volume—which concludes in 1865—is all one needs. Ultimately Gladstone is more interesting before he becomes Prime Minister for the first time in 1868 than afterwards. It is the progress that transformed the "rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories," as Macaulay dubbed him in 1838, into the "People's William" beloved of Radicals, that fascinates.

The Republican Tradition

DEMOCRACY'S DISCONTENT: AMERICA IN SEARCH OF A PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY. *By Michael Sandel. Harvard University Press. $24.95.*

Reviewed by ADAM WOLFSON

The facts of the case are familiar enough: An unmarried woman who is known to us as Jane Roe was pregnant and wanted an abortion. Something that the state of Texas, which insisted that life begins at conception, would not grant her. But in the landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruled that the constitutional "right to privacy" "is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." The Court disinterestedly noted that Texas was making a value judgment; that there was no need to "resolve the difficult question of when life begins"; that, in the face of moral complexity and pluralism, the state must remain neutral; that it was the responsibility of the state to enforce individual rights (in this case, Jane Roe's right to privacy) not any particular moral perspective (in this case, the human dignity of her fetus).

The decision was seemingly a great victory for modern liberalism's notion of justice, which places the right before the good, and its notion of toleration, which respects different life-style choices, as they are called. Or was it? In his new book, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*, Michael Sandel, a political theorist at Harvard, notes that, though the Court aspired to neutrality, it failed. The decision, in Sandel's opinion, "presupposes" a certain view—namely, that the fetus is not a person protected by the Constitution. Only those who think that the fetus is not a person could be happy with the decision; those who think otherwise would necessarily interpret the decision as endorsing or, at least, acquiescing to murder. As Sandel puts it, "If the Catholic church is right about the moral status of the fetus, if abortion is morally tantamount to murder, then it is not clear why the political values of toleration and women's equality, important though they are, should prevail."

If Sandel sounds here and elsewhere in his book like a conservative, he is quick to correct any such impression: he points out that he is not "argu[ing] against a right to abortion," and he condemns the religious right for intolerance and misguided moralism. Instead, he adheres to a school of thought known as "communitarianism" or "civic republicanism."

For nearly two decades, representatives of this school (including Sandel, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, and others) have engaged our age's foremost expositors and defenders of liberalism—particularly John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin—over the nature and direction of the liberal enterprise.

✪ ADAM WOLFSON is Executive Editor of *The Public Interest.*

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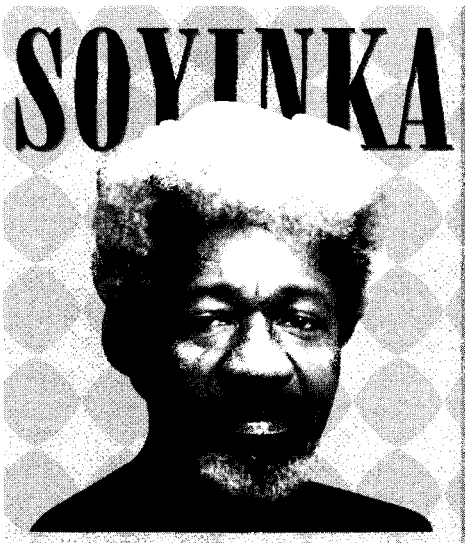

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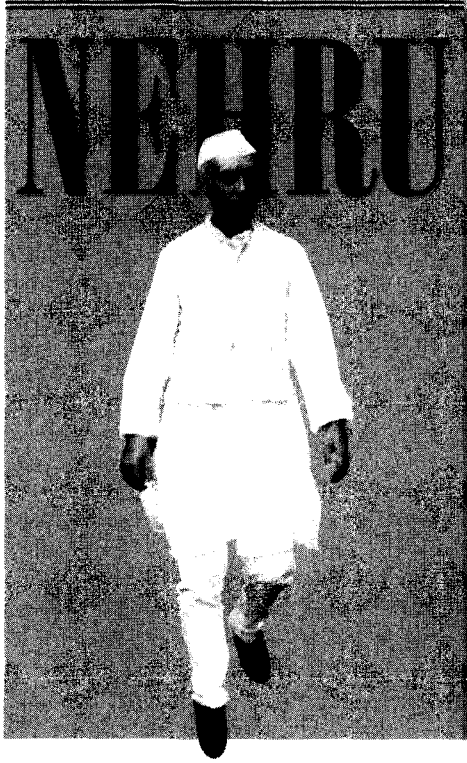

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Although there is reason to doubt whether the two sides are, in fact, that far apart, the debate has not always been civil. Accusations of dogmatism and of unfair rhetoric have been leveled. Stephen Holmes has even accused the communitarians of wanting "to rehabilitate fascist rhetoric without fascist connotations."

Yet beneath the polemics, serious philosophical issues have been raised. In his first book, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, which is neatly summarized in the first chapter of his current book, Sandel, with great dexterity and insight, argued that the self posited by modern (that is, Rawlsian) liberalism was not plausible. That self is what Sandel called an "unencumbered self," which was "prior to and independent of its purposes and ends." According to him, however, such an image of the self cannot account for the many ends (religious, cultural, familial) that individuals feel they have, not because they choose them but because they are theirs from the start. In other words, according to Sandel, we are "encumbered selves"; such selves do not autonomously choose their ends but are in important ways already claimed by certain moral, religious, or cultural commitments. And thus the "neutral state" or "procedural republic," which was so nicely captured by the reasoning of the Court in *Roe v. Wade*, is both an impossibility and a danger. It is impossible in the sense that humans are not, in fact, "freely choosing, unencumbered selves"; it is a danger in that if it succeeds in atomizing citizens, "disenchantment" will spread and democratic government will wither.

Sandel's new book is rooted in the same philosophic issues that have preoccupied him for more than a decade, but political practice is its chief subject. Sandel aims to excavate "the political theory implicit in our practice" and to unearth "the assumptions about citizenship and freedom that inform our public life." This is an ambitious, almost Socratic, project, which perhaps accounts for the book's unusual length (350 pages). It is divided into two parts. The first traces the decline of republicanism and the advent of the procedural republic in constitutional law over the past two hundred years. The second traces the same matters at work in our public discourse over economic issues. The book has many strengths, most notably its account of how the doctrine of neutrality has come to dominate the Supreme Court's jurisprudence in the areas of religious liberty, freedom of speech, and family law. However, while there is something to Sandel's story of a decline—from public-spirited republicanism to anemic individualistic liberalism—the telling of it is flawed in that Sandel never really defines these two poles that frame his discussion.

Liberalism is the serpent, according to Sandel, that led the American people out of the republican garden of Eden. But it is never entirely clear whether his indictment of liberalism extends to the whole of liberalism or mainly to the modern variety embodied in the political thought of Rawls, Dworkin, and Robert Nozick. This is a crucial distinction, for the cure must fit the disease: Either radical surgery is needed or perhaps just outpatient care.

"As a reigning public philosophy," Sandel writes, "the version of liberalism that informs our present debates is a recent arrival, a development of the last forty or fifty years." Subsequently, however, he suggests that the first constitutional expression of the priority of the right over the good was the case of *Lochner v. New York* in 1905—though he also discerns the voluntarist liberal view of freedom in public discourse as early as the 1860s. It thus appears that the Rawlsian vision of liberalism is not an anomaly but has deep historical roots and, as Sandel pointed out in his earlier book, deep philosophic roots within the liberal tradition which reach back to Kant.

But if Rawls is not the culprit—Sandel's version of American constitutional and political history makes Rawls seem more a codifier than an originator—then precisely how and when did the serpent sneak into the garden? Were nineteenth-century Americans readers of Kant?

Though Sandel does not say, they were certainly familiar with the very different liberalism of John Locke. Sandel, however, makes barely any effort to show how this variant of liberalism affected America's public philosophy; and, when he does, he unconvincingly emphasizes its purportedly republican aspects. For example, the founders along with Locke, he says, understood religious liberty as a protection for "encumbered selves, claimed by duties they cannot renounce, even in the face of civil obligations that may conflict." Sandel takes Locke (along with Madison and Jeffer-

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son) to believe that "people never choose their religious beliefs." But, here's what Locke actually argues in his *Letter Concerning Toleration:*

> I say it [a church] is a free and voluntary Society. No body is born a member of any church; otherwise the Religion of Parents would descend unto Children. . . . No Man by nature is bound unto any particular Church or Sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that Society in which *he believes he has found that Profession and* Worship which is truly acceptable to God.

Locke, then, is, if we must use Sandel's terminology, not a defender of the encumbered self, as Sandel would like us to believe, but of something closer to the unencumbered self. Thus, although Sandel suggests that Rawls is his principal target, his critique would appear to extend far beyond Rawls or recent Supreme Court cases or even Kant all the way to the first stirrings of liberalism in Locke's defense of religious toleration, which so vitally informed Madison's and Jefferson's thoughts on religious liberty. In short, his philosophic misgivings about liberalism run deep, to say the least.

His alternative is not a well-thought-out political philosophy or set of political practices but a desultory search for a lost republicanism. Aristotle, Machiavelli, Jefferson, Tocqueville, Brandeis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy are all part of the "republican tradition" that he defends. But what is one to make of such a diverse group? Is it really possible to mix Aristotle's idea of the best regime (which incorporates slavery) with King's defense of equality and the rights of man? Is Jefferson's preference for the sturdy farmer really so easily combined with Brandeis's defense of the petit bourgeois? Is Sandel's endorsement of ancient republicanism—"sharing in self-rule"—compatible with his endorsement of modern republicanism—which "taught that a certain distance between the people and their government was unavoidable, even desirable—provided that distance was filled with mediating institutions that gathered people together and equipped them to share in self-rule"?

But Sandel wants to have his cake and eat it too. Thus he acknowledges the worries of many that "republican political theory as traditionally conceived" (but isn't he a defender of "the republican tradition"?) is "exclusive" and

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"coercive." Its lofty ends of participating in rule and cultivating virtue led Aristotle to deny citizenship to women, slaves, and foreigners; and led Rousseau to contemplate the need to force the unwilling to be free. But Sandel takes away no lessons from his study of the "republican tradition." He sees no reason why it can't "sometimes find democratic, pluralistic expression"; no reason why it can't cultivate not only "commonality" but also independence. In fact, he even sees no reason why republicanism can't go cosmopolitan, where "multiply-encumbered citizens" will learn to negotiate their way "among the sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting obligations" and loyalties that claim them.

So, notwithstanding his criticism of liberalism, especially Rawlsian liberalism, it is not so clear that Sandel the communitarian offers a genuine alternative. He, too, frets over the distribution of wealth in America and the threat posed by the religious right. It is, of course, nice to find a Harvard professor who will point out problems with the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Roe v. Wade*; but, as Sandel is quick to add, this "is no argument against its decision."

Here's to the Ladies

CAMBRIDGE WOMEN: TWELVE PORTRAITS. *Edited by Edward Shils and Carmen Blacker. Cambridge University Press. $54.95. Paper, $18.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN MEURIG THOMAS

Cambridge was the last university in the British Isles to admit women to full membership. Oxford gave degrees to women from 1921, but it was not until 1947 that the proposal to admit women to the same degrees as men was passed in Cambridge without a division or a murmur of dissent. The story of the "Titular Degree," introduced in 1897—thanks to the strenuous effort of MPs, QCs, Fellows of the Royal Society, archdeacons, earls, and trainloads of clergymen who converged upon Senate House—is a quite shameful one. As Carmen Blacker reminds us in her admirable preface to this evocative book, Titular Degrees meant no more than degrees in name, with no substance or reality behind the name, and certainly no membership in the university.

Yet the twelve distinguished women, equipped with their Titular Degrees, triumphed in that very era when there was so much discrimination against women. Eleanor Sidgwick (1845–1936), one of the founders of Newnham College—a mathematician of distinction in her own right—used to argue, with unassailable logic and confidence, with male opponents whom she accused of continually presenting different hurdles: "As soon as women have proved that they could reach the highest places in the Mathematical and Classical Triposes, their feminine qualities are then thought to prevent them from rigorous mental work afterwards."

One can but rejoice in the arrival of this fascinating volume. Not only does each portrait provide a vivid account of a brilliant personality, but, collectively, the achievement of all twelve reminds us of the towering contribution they made to the personal history of the University of Cambridge. Although each of these twelve, from time to time, was heard to comment upon the paradoxes and idiosyncrasies of the status of women at Cambridge, each exhibited an almost saintly absence of complaint about their own standing in the university or in British society.

The efforts of each of the twelve women who constitute this attractive gallery of portraits remind us yet again that the true scholar is animated and impelled by forces that sweep aside or cut through the restrictions of pettifogging and unjust regulation. Helen Fowler's opening chapter describes Eleanor (Nora) Sidgwick's unique personality, powerful, yet remote, and her working partnership with her eminent husband, Professor Henry Sidgwick, in the inception both of the new college for women and of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). A great deal has been heard previously of the Sidgwicks' role in the founding of Newnham College. But new insights are given here to their devotion to the SPR of which, in turn, each was president. Science and religion had earlier in the century gone hand in hand; the Sigwicks' labors in the field

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of psychical phenomena stemmed from a desire to give such matters scientific treatment. The harnessing of scientific techniques to the exploration of the supernatural was a sensible idea, because the sureties of faith were at that time seen to be challenged by scientific discovery. Their enthusiasms and efforts in this regard were boosted by no less a figure than Lord Rayleigh, Cavendish Professor from 1879 to 1884 and Chancellor of Cambridge University from 1908 to 1914. Rayleigh, who was married to Nora Sidgwick's sister, also became president of the SPR, as did another contemporary eminent scientist, Sir William Crookes.

June Harrison (1850–1928) is renowned for her work in Greek ritual and religion, and we are reminded in Hugh Lloyd-Jones's chapter on her that she helped to initiate a new era in classical studies in Britain.

J. Maynard Keynes's sparkling account of the work of Mary Paley Marshall (1850–1944), which first appeared in his *Essays in Biography,* is reproduced here. "Mary Marshall deserves a record of piety and remembrance, not only as the wife of Alfred Marshall, without whose understanding and devotion his work would not have fulfilled his fruitfulness, but for her place in the history of Newnham, as the first woman lecturer on economics in Cambridge, and for her part in the development of the Marshall Library of Economics in the last twenty years of her life."

Helen Cam (1885–1968) was the first woman to earn the Litt.D. degree (in 1937). Her work as a medieval historian, on the Hundred Rolls of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, and the respect and honor accorded to this austere lady in Girton for twenty-seven years, is elegantly told by Janet Sondheimer.

Marjory Stephenson (1895–1948) earned the distinction of being one of the first two women to be elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1945 (the other was Kathleen Lonsdale, the crystallographer) for her pioneering work on bacterial biochemistry. Joan Mason shows how, before 1929, a woman could be debarred from being a Fellow of such a body because she was not, in the language of the day, a "legal person." Had it not been for sympathetic lobbying on the part of some male Fellows, it is doubtful whether she would have been elected in 1945.

The portraits in this gallery illuminate our own vision of things. In the second essay, by Helen Fowler, we have a vivid portrait of the poet Frances Cornford (1886–1960), the only one of the twelve with no formal affiliation with either University or College. Nora Chadwick's life (1891–1972) is beautifully painted by Hilda Ellis Davidson; and we are told in the preface by Carmen Blacker that Nora Chadwick, while she was engaged with her husband in the production of their monumental multivolume treatise *The Growth of Literature,* did not go out for a meal for more than twenty-five years. This is self-abnegation on a scale surely unheard of, even in Cambridge. Moreover, Nora Chadwick did not, it seems, much relish going to an English church service, but she never missed an opportunity of listening to religious services in Gaelic or in Welsh.

Landmarks in the early years of English studies in Cambridge are recalled in Elsie Duncan-Jones's article on Enid Welsford (1892–1981). And the contributions made to functionalist anthropology and cognate topics, particularly the practices of the Bemba tribe, by Audrey Richards (1899–1984), one of Malinowski's first pupils, are set out by Adam Kuper. The unique combination of gifts—administrative, scientific, and imaginative—possessed by Honor Fell (1900–1986), the driving force behind the Strangeways Research Laboratory, are brought out by Joan Mason.

I have reserved till last my two favorite portraits. Future historians of science will surely treasure the memorable recollection of Rosalind Franklin (1920–1958) by her sister Jenifer Glynn. For the first ten years of my research life, I frequently consulted and quoted Rosalind Franklin's work—not the work for which she is most renowned, on DNA, but her brilliant analysis cited by Jenifer Glynn on page 277 of this book: "her series of beautifully executed researches [that establish] the fundamental distinction between carbons that turned on heating into graphite and those that did not." Graphite, which I studied for many years, is a beautiful black glistening solid, and as Jenifer Glynn rightly says: "This work helped form the basis for the development of carbon fibres." The fuselage and much of the interior structural work of modern jet aircraft rely on the superior structural properties of carbon fibers, and Rosalind Franklin's contribution was quite crucial to our understanding of the factors that influence the strength of such fibers.

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As to Eileen Power (1889–1940), what great good fortune did one of the former Fellows of Peterhouse, M. M. Postan, have when, as a Russian émigré who had studied at St. Petersburg, Odessa, and Kiev, he arrived at the London School of Economics and became a student and later a research assistant of Eileen Power. In 1937 Postan became the husband of Eileen Power—she was then forty-seven and he was some ten years her junior. What a fascinating, exciting, and vivacious character she must have been! Picture her—the author of *Medieval People, Tudor Economic Documents,* and *Medieval English Nunneries*—a friend and collaborator of R. H. Tawney and H. G. Wells and a former teacher of Dora Russell and Hugh Gaitskell. She frequently went to the Gargoyle Club, the Soho nightclub favored by London's bohemian intellectuals. She resigned from that club after it refused to allow her to take in Paul Robeson when he was visiting London. That is the kind of episode and character that emerges from the pages of this charming book. There is no doubt that the editors of this volume have been altogether successful in tracing the enormous contribution that these Cambridge women made to the ethos and tone of the great university which they served and from which they were too long excluded.

A Grove of Academe

ALMA MATER: A COLLEGE HOMECOMING. *By P. F. Kluge. Addison-Wesley. $22.95.*

Reviewed by FELICIA ACKERMAN

The New Republic recently ran this item: "Fall Book Sizzler: *Essays in Canadian Surface Transportation.*" The title *Alma Mater: A College Homecoming* may evoke a similar reaction, unless (or especially if?) you have spent time at a college lately. Even if you are seeking information about contemporary colleges and universities, there is no shortage of books ready to enlighten you. There are books bemoaning the current state of higher education. There are books defending it. There are college guides for a colossal range of constituencies: liberals, conservatives, blacks, racial minorities in general, students on tight budgets, the learning disabled. . . . Is there anything new to say about present-day college life?

P. F. Kluge thinks so. A Kenyon College alumnus who now teaches part-time in the English Department there, he aims to give a thorough picture of a year at the college from the viewpoints of faculty, students, and administrators. He prides himself on covering aspects of college life not written about elsewhere. Like many guidebook writers, he exaggerates the distinctiveness of his product.

> Amazingly, every academic novel I've read—*Pictures from an Institution, The Groves of Academe, A New Life*—has been about personal crisis or marital politics. There's never a classroom scene, a student dropping by to manipulate a grade, a lecture that went from good to bad to good again, a seminar that was a three-hour march through a mountain range of ups and downs.

But of course there are academic novels with classroom scenes (Jon Hassler's splendid *Simon's Night,* for instance), and one of the novels Kluge cites, Bernard Malamud's *A New Life,* has a scene involving a student dropping by to manipulate a grade.

Still, Kluge's book has much to offer. Good writing, for one thing; he has a gift for imaginative similes, such as:

> The history of research at Kenyon is like the history of drinking in America. These days Kenyon encourages research in moderate, social amounts. Don't get drunk, God forbid, but a glass or two of wine with dinner, fine. That's today. But [English professor] Ron Sharp arrived in what he perceives as the depths of prohibition, when the drys ran the campus. "When I came in 1970," he says . . . "[t]he ambiance was not just no emphasis on writing. It was dramatically clear that writing and research was a major violation of your responsibilities."

This passage also illustrates one of the book's main themes: conflict. Some of the conflicts are predictable: research vs. teaching, liberals vs. conservatives, fraternities vs. independents. Others are more idiosyncratic. Kenyon used to have a rule requiring faculty to live within ten miles of campus, and more

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than traces of the sentiment behind this rule linger. "When people talk about moving to Columbus, we're no goddamned different from Columbia University," says one economist. Another professor insists: "You can't dictate where professionals should live. You can't legislate community." Kluge's feelings are mixed.

. . . sure enough, it's possible to arrange your schedule so that you spend just two days a week in Gambier, holding great classes, supportive office hours; you can do all of that in two days and leave. But Kenyon markets itself as a residential college, human scale and personal touch, the kind of place where you run into professors at the bookstore, bank, and post office, where you bullshit and baby-sit for them, pray, play, and . . . well . . . live together in the same small place. If you care about things like that, if you think they're essential and not merely cosmetic, you start to worry. . . .

"Kenyon markets itself." Is that the real issue? It would be too cynical to dismiss Kenyon's carefully promoted sense of community simply as a marketing device to get parents to shell out upwards of $80,000 for four years at the college, instead of sending their children to a state university at less than a third of the cost. Financial concerns do not explain Kenyon's kindness to Mike Stone, a student with terminal cancer, whom the college awarded an honorary degree after it became clear that he would not live long enough to graduate. But Kluge and his informants are refreshingly frank about how financial considerations shape some of the college's academic policies. Faculty and administrators may discuss what kinds of students it is desirable to admit, for example, but all are aware that, since the college's small endowment makes it heavily dependent on tuition, "Paying customers [applicants who can pay full tuition] cannot be summarily dismissed." This bottom-line outlook penetrates to students as well. "Customers start looking at the college they're paying for critically, even cynically." Who can blame them, in view of situations like the following?

One guy, a chemistry major back from a junior year in Leningrad, keeps dogging me for a place in my fiction writing course. . . . He's just the sort of character I'd like to admit; these non-English majors are often wild cards, loose cannons, and they can light up a room. . . . But my class is full. . . . He hands me a registration schedule filled with pickup courses he doesn't have the least interest in. Wanting to get away—there's nothing I can do for him—I suggest that this was part of the cost of going abroad [to] Leningrad. "No," he shakes his head. "It's not Leningrad. The problem is here. I'm paying $20,000 a year. I'm a senior, and I want to take some English."

Alma Mater is by no means a muckraking enterprise. The book includes glowing descriptions of the beauty of the campus, as well as appealing prototypical scenes of small-college life, such as a history seminar at the home of the college president. And here is what Ted Mason, Kenyon's first black tenured professor, tells his Afro-American literature classes.

Criticizing Alice Walker—her metaphors, her moves toward closure—isn't criticizing her blackness. Don't imagine that this class is about you. It's about how Toni Morrison writes—and not all black writers are doing the same thing. . . . We don't need to view African-American life through one lens. The basic thing is, *this is not therapy.* I'm not good at it. My degree's not in it. And group therapy for thirty isn't particularly effective. (Italics in original)

Unsurprisingly, not all Kenyon professors have such common sense, intellectual sophistication, and respect for students. Biology professor Ryn Edwards teaches a course in female sexuality, where one assignment is a "herstory," a "health and sexual autobiography from the women, to be completed and submitted in a sealed envelope," including such information as age at menarche, sexual orientation, and history of sexual abuse, if any. Edwards also "admonished the men in class to say little or nothing while the women talked." She justified this restriction as follows:

The course was about women. . . . Every woman in the class had a female body, a history of growth, puberty, menstruation. Many had a history of sexual relations, some had abortions and diseases. Men in class weren't similarly qualified. It might follow, therefore, that they'd have less to say and more to learn by listening.

Obviously, it violates students' privacy to require them to tell a professor their sexual orientation or history of sexual abuse. It is equally obvious that requiring men to listen

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BEING AND TIME

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A Translation of *Sein und Zeit*

Martin Heidegger

Translated by Joan Stambaugh

The publication of Martin Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time*, in 1927, signaled an intellectual event of the first order and had an impact in fields far beyond that of philosophy proper. Among the most complex and original analyses of the character of philosophic inquiry and the relation of the possibility of such inquiry to the human situation, *Being and Time* has long been recognized as a landmark work of the twentieth century. Still provocative and much disputed, Heidegger's text has been taken as the inspiration for a variety of innovative movements in fields ranging from psychoanalysis, literary theory, existentialism, ethics, hermeneutics, and theology. A work that disturbs the traditions of philosophizing that it inherits, *Being and Time* raises questions about the end of philosophy and the possibilities for thinking liberated from the presumptions of metaphysics.

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passively to women precludes the intellectual interchange that comes from critical questioning. Kluge does not fault Edwards on these or other grounds. His attitude toward her could serve as a model of the uncriticalness she wants from her male students. He even characterizes her as "impressive."

But it would be a mistake to dismiss Kluge as an apologist for the politically correct. He writes sympathetically of campus conservatives as well. His book is notable for his lack of sharp criticism of anyone at Kenyon, perhaps because he had "been amply warned that writing about a year in the life of a small liberal arts college was asking for trouble, a visiting professor's career suicide. It was like writing about your parents when they were still alive . . . and able to revise their will."

Acknowledging this conflict of interest, however, hardly solves the problem. Kluge's discussion of Edwards is not the only place where his collegial attitude may be what weakens his treatment of matters that cry out for critical examination. He writes ambivalently about "spousal hiring," the practice of rigging faculty searches to favor the spouses of present (or desirable prospective) faculty. He seems oblivious to the fact that it is just plain unfair to give an edge to an academic job candidate because of his or her spouse—and that it is ludicrous that favoring women who are married to powerful men has come to count in certain circles as a progressive and feminist thing to do.

Another person Kluge lets off the hook too easily is himself. He did not hide the fact that he was writing a book about the college, and his Afterword worries about "letting . . . down" the students and faculty who "had trusted" him. But he shows no qualms about including an account of a philosophy department job search, complete with detailed descriptions of unsuccessful candidates. He does not say whether the candidates consented to, or even knew about, the presence of a non-philosopher who sat in on their interviews, not to assist in the selection process, but to write about it—and about them. But since they hardly would have been in a position to refuse, their consent would have been meaningless in any case.

Unless you are one of these over-exposed applicants, though, you may well find that the book's virtues outweigh its faults. *Alma Mater* is lively, interesting, and often funny. It is even, in its own way, heartening. Kenyon College is very different from a research university, a state college, or any school in a large city. Many students and faculty would find its isolation and self-conscious sense of community oppressive. But these are precisely the aspects of Kenyon that other people love, and America's varied colleges and universities provide "diversity" in the best sense of that over-used word.

Is That All There Is?

KINGSLEY AMIS: A BIOGRAPHY. *By Eric Jacobs. Hodder and Stoughton. £17.99.*

Reviewed by RICHARD JONES

When Kingsley Amis published his memoirs in 1991, he prefaced the book with an explanation as to why it lacked a connected narrative and why he had tried to keep himself "away from centre stage": "To publish an account of my own intimate, domestic, sexual experiences would hurt a number of people who have emotional claims on me," he wrote, "and I have no desire to cause pain, or further pain, to them or myself."

Then, more or less in the same paragraph, Amis modified this pious tone by adding:

> Even as they are, there is probably quite enough about me in these pages, more than I intended or realise. And I have already written an account of myself in twenty or more volumes, most of them called novels. Novels they fully are, too, and those who know both them and me will also know that they are firmly unautobiographical, but at the same time every word of them inevitably says something about the kind of person I am.

So far so good (and so trite); but a short time after Amis brought out his memoirs or allobiography, as he called it, he clearly had second thoughts and decided that his many readers needed to know exactly what "kind of a person" he was; and with this in mind he

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gave Eric Jacobs, a Scots journalist working in London, the go-ahead for an official life-story. Jacobs enjoyed what his British publishers claim was "unique access" to Amis's papers during a "close working relationship" lasting two and a half years.

This even involved getting from the depository of an unwilling Bodleian Library in Oxford copies of Amis's own letters to the poet Philip Larkin. The Bodleian's policy is to hold back the letters of people still alive because other living people might be hurt by them; so Amis had the bright idea of asking the library to send him copies of his own letters and offered to pay for the work himself. It took the Bodleian, according to Jacobs, "all of five months to finish the job of copying and posting 500 or 600 letters."

Jacobs had already written one version of the biography without the correspondence; once it was available, he rewrote large sections, and, it is clear, given Larkin's crucial role in Amis's early development as a writer, that the biography would have been diminished without Amis's own letters.

All the same, as Jacobs points out, his book "is not a literary biography in the critical sense. I have not attempted to evaluate Amis's novels and other writings against each other or measure them against other writers' work. . . . No judgement of quality, but only of biographical relevance is intended."

The most obvious disadvantage of this method is that the flow of the narrative gets held up while Jacobs reminds his readers how Amis used such and such an event in his fiction; and this serves to illustrate, too, how quickly Amis turned his experiences into "fiction" and, also, how small-scaled his life was. What is the point of knowing that a fictional character is based on this or that person or that incidents in the novels are, more or less, straight reporting? Would it not have been more interesting to know what Amis's first father-in-law thought about the way he had been portrayed in *Lucky Jim* or how Philip Larkin's longtime friend and ipso facto wife, Monica Jones, reacted when she realized that her lover had given intimate details about her to Amis so that he could create the unattractive Margaret, also a *Lucky Jim* character?

Possibly these questions would have been too awkward, or Jacobs took it for granted that novelists cannibalize their acquaintances for their own purposes (very unfriendly, in the case of the two people mentioned). The big question that Jacobs did not ask is why Amis, after deciding not to hurt those close to him, changed his mind so radically that there are times when the motive of this life story seems to be to get the last drop of venom out of old feuds and to let those who had once been his nearest and dearest know exactly what he thinks of them. So aggressive are Amis's comments that the appalled reader, knowing the severity of the British libel laws, cannot help but hold his breath on several occasions.

Amis has allowed Jacobs the freedom to be no less ferocious when Amis himself is involved. The biography opens with an eighteen-page "Portrait of the Artist in Age," an unsparing account of a typical Amis day in the last year or so of his life. We are told about his work habits, his meals, his bowel movements, his likes (few) and his dislikes (many), his heavy drinking, his avoirdupois, his trouble shaving because of his hanging jowls, his false teeth "cleaning themselves" in a glass. This is the Amis of the last cartoons: the florid-faced, dyspeptic, self-styled "pop-eyed reactionary" moving between his north-London home and his pub and his West End club, while handing out well-honed opinions on literary and political matters.

The literary opinions are perhaps too well known, but Jacobs gives them:

> The canon of English fiction and poetry which Amis personally endorses is small. Many sacred cows are unsacred to him. If it were possible to imagine Amis on a protest demonstration in the 1990s . . . and if he were to set up his banners outside some university Eng. Lit. faculty, the legends on them would probably read "Down with Dickens! E. M. Forster! D. H. Lawrence! James Joyce!" Not to mention a fistful of more recent writers from Anthony Burgess to William Golding. Oh, yes, and the author of Beowulf—especially down with that Old English bore! Each of these Amis believes is overrated, mainly because he finds them tedious or false, although he will allow that Chaucer and even the author of Beowulf have something to be said for them if you compare what they wrote with the work of their even more unreadable contemporaries.

By this time, it is clear that Jacobs has intended a plain man's, no-nonsense guide to Amis, and since he has a direct, open style, and writes in a well-paced way, the pages turn

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themselves merrily, although in the first hundred or so, he does not tell us much that has not already been covered by Amis's own memoirs. We read again of Amis's early years in a respectable, characterless London suburb; we are told about the mildly Dickensian personalities of his family; the details of his education at an excellent London school; his time in the army, his youthful left-wing politics, his meeting with Larkin at Oxford and their joint efforts to subvert the received values of the Oxford English department.

And then the new material begins. It is 1948 and Amis was living with his young wife in a village outside Oxford. They had one child and a second was expected. Amis's wife, Hillary (Hilly) Bardwell, had been an art student turned model, and she found village life constricted. It was at this time that she discovered that her husband was being unfaithful to her.

"Proof came in the unequivocal form of entries in a diary which she happened to come across, Amis having made no effort to hide it." The evidence was made especially horrifying for the young wife as she knew some of the girls involved. So, early in his marriage, Amis "established a pattern of infidelity which was to last as long as the marriage itself. In this, as in other things, he was determined to indulge his appetite to the full."

The marriage survived, Amis found a position at the University College, Swansea, and in 1954 brought out *Lucky Jim*, which established his reputation as a comic writer; but his philandering went on. By the late 1950s he was obliged to call on Robert Conquest, whom he had met at a publishers' party in 1952, to help him cover up an affair with a Swansea woman. A couple of years later he asked Conquest if he could "fix me up with a bed" at 11:30 in the morning. He asked Conquest to reply to the university "because a fault in my security system has led Hilly to connect a Conquest letter with an impending Amis screw."

Jacobs insists that Amis was not unsatisfied with his wife but could not resist an affair: "His opportunism in these matters was prodigious throughout his married life." During Amis's period at Princeton in 1958, he had one serious affair which gave rise to "the most strenuous and painful row" Amis and his wife had ever had and made the children cry.

Hilly Amis, in revenge, started affairs of her own, which Amis knew about and resented. She eventually left him, and they were divorced in 1965. By this time, Amis was living with the novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard, who, Jacobs writes, "was glamorous, intelligent, sexy and a writer whom he could respect." They had met at a literary festival. The marriage (which took place in 1965) lasted until 1980 when Howard, to use an upper-class verb much loved by Nancy Mitford, "bolted" and sought refuge in a health farm. Howard refused to return unless Amis gave up drinking, which, she said, was "his main problem, the chief reason why he had become unbearable and she could no longer live with him."

Once Howard was out of his life, "Amis gave up on women, at any rate as sexual partners. At fifty-eight he was not looking for a new wife and he no longer pursued women in order to get them into bed." The real reason, Jacobs writes, is that sex no longer interested him: he had lost the urge. Because of this, Jacobs claims, Amis seemed to believe he could see women more clearly—"his vision unclouded by lust."

Jacobs maintains that Amis's variety of misogyny was partial and qualified: "He was sympathetic to women as a class, believing they got the raw end of most deals in life, as wives or mothers or in work. . . . But his sympathies were also detached, like the feelings anyone might have for a clearly disadvantaged group of people seen suffering on television in some distant spot on the globe."

Amis's misogyny is strange since he had, in earlier years, given a broadcast under the title "Letter to Someone's Son," which dealt with relations between the sexes. One of the points in his talk concerned the power that men have over women (economic, social, biological, psychological). He suggested that because of this men can damage women far more severely than women can damage men. Amis added, "A man who realises he has this power and never uses it is a man who likes women."

In later years, Amis wanted less to do with women because, according to Jacobs, they talked too much. "Conversation was important to Amis, and women, he believed, monopolised it whenever they could and so spoiled the flow. . . . That was one reason why the male-member Garrick Club was such a good place for him to spend time."

When Jacobs gets to the period of Amis's

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divorce from Howard, with all the acrimony over property and the family silver, it's clear that Amis had abandoned any pretense of liking women. There is something shameless and demeaning in his hatred for Howard and in the hideous tone of the remarks about her in this book.

There was one exception to this distaste for women's company: Amis's first wife who "did not talk too much." Her presence, too, says Jacobs, was always a delight. After the break with Howard, Amis's boys reunited their parents, even though their mother was, by this time, married for the third time—and to a member of the House of Lords. An improbable ménage à trois was set up in north London which suited everyone and Amis, we are told," constructed a life that was as much like being married to Hilly as he could contrive to make it without going so far as to destroy the harmony of Regent's Park Road."

Jacobs ends his narrative more or less at the time Amis published his memoirs. He sees in one of the last Amis novels *You Can't Do Both* a kind of mea culpa for the way he had treated Hilly. "The novel is a novel," Jacobs writes, "taking its place alongside the others in Amis's *oeuvre*. But it is also an apology, a message of love and regret. And it is addressed to Hilly."

A reader of the Jacobs biography does not need to be clairvoyant to see that in giving the journalist all the details of his life, with apparently so little hidden, Amis was once again making a clean breast in the interest of showing his first wife where and how he had gone wrong. The book is not dedicated to her, but it might have been.

At this point Peggy Lee should enter singing, "Is that all there is?" The answer, unfortunately, is yes. A whole retelling of Amis's life in order to make amends to his first wife? So it seems, for nothing Jacobs finds out adds to anyone's respect for Amis's ideals, such as they were, or opinions, which often seem to be provocative for the sake of being provocative. Nowhere is this more evident than in his political ideas: communist to shock his father and right wing to irritate the London literary crowd. When Amis's targets in Britain's class-ridden social democracy are placed side by side with the enemies of such people as Akhmatova, Solzhenitsyn, Nadine Gordimer, or Wole Soyinka, the Amis house of cards collapses. There is nothing there to elevate as a model or to condemn as noxious; but on the personal level—the sole habitat of this biography—individual acts of bad faith stand out unexplained and must inspire the question: How the hell did Amis get away with so much that was meretricious and for so long? Why, for example, did no one from Vanderbilt University give the faculty's point of view after Amis had written disobligingly about the racism he said he experienced there? Why, too, did no one challenge Amis's appointment as a trustee of the Dylan Thomas estate, on which the poet's widow depended, when he used every occasion to undermine and trash Thomas's reputation? Jacobs repeats Amis's allegations about Vanderbilt at length and ignores the second matter entirely.

Amis's biography came out in England in June 1995, three months before his last novel, *The Biographer's Moustache*—generally considered not very good. As usual, Amis had turned an immediate experience into a novel. In this case, it was his collaboration with Eric Jacobs. To complete the circle, Jacobs was asked by the London *Spectator* to review the novel. He only found one point at which the transac-

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tions between Amis and himself resembled those between the fictional author and his fictional biographer: both biographical researches were begun with a boozy lunch. Amis Kingsley died in October 1995.

School of One

EDWARD HOPPER: AN INTIMATE BIOGRAPHY. *By Gail Levin. Knopf. $35.*

Reviewed by ALAN RUTENBERG

Clement Greenberg once persuasively described Edward Hopper as a bad painter but a superior artist. Greenberg wrote: "He is not a painter in the full sense; his means are second hand, shabby, and impersonal. But his rudimentary sense of composition is sufficient for a message that conveys an insight into the present nature of American life for which there is no parallel in our literature, though that insight in itself is literary."

In her new biography, Gail Levin, the leading authority on Hopper, does surprisingly little to illuminate Hopper either as a painter or as an artist. It is typical of her lack of sustained interest in aesthetic questions that she answers Greenberg's criticism with a personal rebuttal, describing him as "the apologist of Pollock." Professor Levin chooses to concentrate instead on the tormented relationship between Hopper and his wife, Jo, whose voluminous diaries are the primary documentary source for this lengthy and undistinguished work. Certainly, Hopper had a difficult personality; a tall, formal man, he was puritan in temperament, conservative in politics. The actress Helen Hayes once said: "I had never met a more misanthropic, grumpy, grouchy individual in my life, and as a performer I just shriveled under the heat of his disapproval. . . . Really I was utterly unnerved by this man."

Professor Levin is less interested in Hopper's impressive character as an artist. Yet her rather mechanical narrative of his persistence as he pursued his own distinctively American style confers an unintended weight on the artist. It confirms, as Hilton Kramer once wrote, that "not the least of Hopper's distinctions is the firm will with which he has sustained and purified his vision in the face of so many countervailing currents."

Edward Hopper was born in Nyack, New York, in 1882 to parents of Dutch and French origins. His father he remembered primarily as a man more comfortable reading Montaigne than working as the salesman he was. His mother, who was artistically inclined, encouraged his evident talent in drawing, and in 1899 Hopper began formal training at the New York School of Illustrating. A year later, he transferred to a more distinguished institution, the New York School of Art, where he came under the influence of the American painter Robert Henri. Henri praised Whitman as a model for the American artist, and Hopper later wrote of Henri: "No single figure in recent American art has been so instrumental in setting free the hidden forces that can make the art of this country a living expression of its character and its people." Despite his energetic interest in American art, Henri also admired Manet and the European Old Masters who influenced him, including Velázquez, Goya, and Hals.

Hopper expressed an early enthusiasm for the French Impressionists, which produced a journey to France in 1906 and a deep and lifelong appreciation of French literature, but he returned to America determined to cultivate American sources. Like Henri, however, he remained attentive to the European tradition; on one page Levin announces the influence of Vermeer, Pissarro, and Caillebotte. Hopper's American sources included not only the painters Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, but also such literary figures as Emerson and Robert Frost, Van Wyck Brooks, and Lewis Mumford. Hopper's American sensibility was highly original, yet throughout his career he was often erroneously associated with both the everyday American realism of the Ashcan School and the picturesque provincialism of the "American Scene" painters.

During his early career, Hopper, of necessity, worked as a commercial illustrator. In doing so, he gained a reputation for his etchings and watercolors, which contained the first indications of themes for which Hopper is now celebrated: interiors that depict a peculiarly American loneliness, exteriors that explore

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the uncanny effects of light on American vernacular architecture.

In 1924 Hopper married Josephine Nivison, an artist who shared his love of French literature. Later that year his recent work came to fruition in an exhibition of watercolors in a secondary inner room of the Rehn Gallery in New York; the primary exhibition space was devoted to a show called "Ten American Paintings," which displayed the work of the then well-established artists. Hopper's work gathered the majority of attention, and one perceptive critic wrote: "Mr. Hopper has never joined a cause nor been the exponent of a theory. He has never belonged to the Academy or to the 'moderns'. He is quintessentially not a group artist and cannot beat a drum." As a result of his success, Hopper was able to abandon commercial illustration, which he richly detested; he then built himself a large easel that he used for the remainder of his life. As Levin writes: "The year 1924 set patterns for a lifetime: the massive easel, the committed dealer, the intense wife, and marital drama."

The marital drama deserves only brief mention. Hopper's wife, Jo, considered herself a serious artist, resented the fact that Hopper provided her no encouragement whatever, and protested her treatment as an artist's wife rather than as an artist in her own right. Levin reports that one admirer of Hopper's work described Jo as "a strange little lady . . . quite resentful of her husband's growing fame." Still, she offered Hopper energetic encouragement and strenuous efforts in publicity. Early in her life and again very much later, critics and dealers paid her some attention, and now the public is invited to do the same, since a considerable number of the illustrations in this biography show her work—which, it turns out, mainly imitates the style of her husband. Unfortunately there are extremely few reproductions of Hopper's own paintings in this biography, though there are numerous sketches and studies.

The reception of Hopper's paintings changed significantly after the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. According to Levin, "'ethnic' or 'foreign' came more and more to be equated with 'un-American'. Seeking traditional native values, critics more and more would find Hopper's figures, with their seemingly 'typical' American faces, and his realist style far less threatening than European-inspired modernist abstraction."

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Hopper stressed the importance of developing a "native art." He wrote with admiration of "certain artists of originality and intelligence who are no longer content to be citizens of the world of art, but believe that now or in the near future American art should be weaned from its French mother." It is no surprise that Hopper was a devoted reader of Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance," or that he admired Van Wyck Brooks, whose literary criticism opposed modernism and underscored the importance of native traditions and the dangers of deracination. Hopper placed himself squarely in the line of those American painters who turned away from Europe, including Inness, Eakins, Homer, Luks, Sloan, Kent, Bellows, and Burchfield. "I don't see why people are so crazy to import French paintings," Hopper said, "when there are so many French paintings being made in America."

When the Washington collector Duncan Phillips purchased one of Hopper's paintings, he wrote to his dealer that Hopper's work belonged in sensibility with the novels of Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and

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Sinclair Lewis. Hopper demurred, claiming, "I think they're a little too mid-western for me." Still, as a painter of New York, Hopper disliked skyscrapers, an attitude that seemed remarkable to the modernist curator Alfred Barr, but entirely familiar to the lover of cities and critic of modernism, Lewis Mumford.

Despite the apparent divide between European modernism and a native American tradition, in 1929 the Museum of Modern Art included Hopper in only its second exhibition, "Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans." This exhibition confirmed his standing as a leading artist of his generation. In 1930, the Whitney Museum purchased *Early Sunday Morning*, which became one of Hopper's signature works. And in 1933, when Hopper was fifty-one, the Museum of Modern Art organized the first retrospective of his work. One reviewer of the retrospective argued that Hopper's work was "the reverse of that which characterized the modern movement" because modernism "definitely breaks with all transferring of appearance from nature to the picture." But Lewis Mumford established the prevailing view when he wrote that Hopper had "caught one phase of America, its loneliness and its visual exhilaration: the loneliness of even occupied houses."

Once established, Hopper's mature style changed little. Hopper was a serious reader, and much of the remainder of Gail Levin's biography, when not weighted down with Jo Hopper's diary entries, offers a strained account of the influence of his wide reading, which included Melville and Dickinson as well as Proust and Valéry.

What did change was the art world in America. With typical awkwardness, Levin writes that Hopper "was slower than Jo to realize the need for defense against the waves of abstraction that had been slowly rising throughout the war." By 1945, abstraction had advanced so far that in the Whitney Annual abstract painters commanded the entire first floor, while Hopper was relegated to the second floor. Hopper responded to this transformation in part by reading Frost, Whitman, Melville, and Van Wyck Brooks for solace and support, especially since Brooks had discussed Whitman and Melville as writers working "in and about New York." He also developed a considered opinion of abstraction, which is worth quoting in full:

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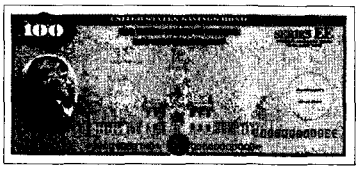

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There is a school of painting called abstractionist or non-objective which is derived largely from the work of Paul Cézanne, that attempts to create "pure painting," that is, an art which will use form, color, and design, for their own sakes, and independent of man's experience of life and his association with nature. I do not believe such an aim can be achieved by a human being. Whether we wish it or not we are all bound to the earth with our experience of life and the reactions of the mind, heart, and eye, and our sensations, by no means, consist entirely of form, color, and design. We would be leaving out a great deal that I consider worthwhile expressing in painting, and it cannot be expressed in literature.

In the post-war period the machinery of criticism produced another set of misreadings. Some critics now found in Hopper affinities to the surrealists, with their concealed meanings and evocations of emotion. Others, influenced by abstract expressionism, complained that Hopper was too illustrative. One critic noted that "it actually takes courage these days for an artist not to conform to the successful formulas of the abstractionists and surrealists," and then proceeded to attack a new Hopper painting, *Summer Evening*, as an image "you could fit . . . to the text of any story in any woman's magazine."

In 1952 Hopper joined a small group of younger New York artists, representational painters trying to defend themselves in an art world increasingly dominated by abstract art. In the same year, twenty works by Hopper were featured in the Venice Biennale, and the response was quite positive. The *New York Times* wrote that "foreigners recognized, and rightly, something authentically American in the pathos of his landscapes, a germ of loneliness which they detect in our literature."

In 1955 Hopper met Robert Frost, whom he had long admired, at a poetry reading. According to Jo's diary, Frost told Hopper that he was the one man there whom he was most interested to meet. Certainly the two had much in common: Frost too was a resolutely American figure who slyly feigned simplicity while recording the private landscapes of American loneliness. During this period, Frost, like Hopper, was eclipsed in critical esteem by modernist figures.

Still, Hopper never slipped out of public view. In 1964, three years before his death, the Whitney Museum organized a major retrospective exhibition of his work. In a review of the exhibition, Hilton Kramer described Hopper as "an artist of unique, if narrow vision—a vision that bequeaths little to the aesthetics of painting but which nonetheless penetrates American experience with a particularly incisive eye." Certainly the better critics and artists, among them Kramer, Clement Greenberg, and Willem de Kooning, have always transcended aesthetic categories, admiring Hopper despite their enthusiasm for modernism and abstraction. As Greenberg once wrote: "A special category of art should be devised for the kind of thing Hopper does." He was in fact an American school of one.

Call for Papers

Race and Ethnicity in American Material Life

The 1997 Winterthur Conference invites proposals for papers that will assess the influence of race and ethnicity as formative factors in American material life from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Potential themes include: objects as means of cultural accommodation and assimilation; objects as indicators of racial and ethnic distinctiveness; literary and artistic representatives of race and ethnicity; American pluralism: a re-evaluation; slavery, segregation and material life; Native-Americans and expansionism. Event dates: October 3–4, 1997. Submit a 250-word proposal to James C. Curtis/ Gary Kulik, Office of Advanced Studies, Winterthur, Delaware 19735. Proposal deadline: January 15, 1997.

1996–1997 Louis Gottschalk Prize

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies announces the 19th Louis Gottschalk Prize for an outstanding historical or critical study on the 18th century. Scholarly books are eligible if they are copyrighted between November 1, 1995 and October 31, 1996. The author must be a member of the Society at the time the award is made. Submission (5 copies) must be made by the publisher by November 15, 1996. Submit to: ASECS, Utah State University, Logan Utah 84322-3730.

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The Reader Replies

About Intelligence

Robert J. Sternberg argues, in "What Should We Ask About Intelligence?" in the Spring 1996 issue, that "traditionalists" dismiss "revolutionary" attacks on the IQ test because they are threatened by alternatives that do a better job of measuring "different intelligences" and "creativity."

The traditionalists don't dismiss the "revolutionary" view for this reason. They do so because the "revolutionary" view casts no light on the area that the traditional view illuminates (i.e., intelligence) and, to this point, has offered more promise than result in the area that the traditional view does not consider (i.e., creativity that is more than intelligence alone).

To see this clearly, one must remember that *any* crucial causal variable can be filtered out, rendering only other variables relevant. For example, *once one weighs 290 pounds,* size is not a correlate of success as a pro-football lineman. At *that* point, speed, intelligence, and the like become the variables that account for ability. But the 150-pound person who incorrectly concludes from this that size is irrelevant to being a pro lineman is in for a very painful learning experience.

Creativity is no more the same as intelligence than is being a pro lineman the same as weighing 290 pounds. Sternberg is certainly correct to distinguish the two; "traditionalists" have been doing so for most of the century.

But intelligence *is* a necessary condition (or at least an overwhelmingly important facilitator) for creativity. There are, as Sternberg says, many people of high intelligence who have very little creativity, just as there are many very large people who are terrible at football. Such people lack *other* necessary conditions.

But there are *exceedingly* few people of low intelligence, or even average intelligence, who are even moderately highly creative, just as there are exceedingly few people of average size who are pro linemen.

Many people intuitively recoil from this obvious truth. They invoke their own versions of Sternberg's intelligent, uncreative Alice and less intelligent, creative Barbara. The problem is that Alice and Barbara are analogous to 310- and 290-pound linemen.

The IQ and SAT do not claim to distinguish between Alice and Barbara with great success; they claim, successfully, to distinguish Alice and Barbara from the vast majority of people. Likewise, the familiar claim that SATs do not predict grades is to a great extent true *at one or another specific selective university.* (This is because the university, by taking only people with, say, the top 10 percent of SAT scores, goes far towards filtering out this variable. If the college took only students with 1600 SATs, it would find *no* correlation between SAT score and grade. To say that the SAT failed for this reason is analogous to denying the truth that size is a necessary condition for being a pro lineman because size cannot predict success once the necessary condition of weighing 290 pounds has been met. If a college selected students randomly there would be a *very* high correlation of SAT score and college grade.)

Similarly, the oft-heard attempt to deny general intelligence claiming that "I'm terrific in English, but hopeless at math" is nearly invariably stated by one who is, in fact, in, say, the 95th percentile verbally and "only" the 85th percentile mathematically. All aptitudes reasonably associated with "intelligence" are highly correlated. We all love the stories of the low-IQ/SAT student who becomes an intellectual or creative giant, but such stories are hardly ever true. (There *are* students who get poor grades and later excel in creative and intellectual fields, but these are students who are early on, correctly, labeled "underachievers" precisely because their test scores identify them, correctly, as intelligent.)

What gives the IQ test its deserved power and reputation is its correlation with success in virtually any field requiring what we intuitively call "intelligence." What renders the tests of creativity at this point dubious, in the view of the traditionalist, is their failure to distinguish the intelligent, creative person from the intelligent, uncreative person. (If they *could* do this, they would be of inestimable value, but they wouldn't cast doubt on the validity of the IQ test in measuring

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intelligence or the high correlation, for the population as a whole, of intelligence and creativity.)

It is not necessary for the supporter of the IQ test to define "intelligence" (the correlation attests to the test's power), and, indeed, many supporters of the test do not. But this has always struck me as a bit silly. We *do* refer to some people as "intelligent" and others as not and we generally agree on who is which; this is proof that the word has meaning.

And, when we consider a wide range of people (and not, say, one's college classmates, who tend to fall within a small range of IQs), we find that our intuitive assessments of intelligence are correlated astonishingly strongly with these people's IQ scores. This is explicable only if IQ measures what we intuitively mean by intelligence. (If tests of "alternative intelligences" ever come to correlate with success in areas for which IQ tests cannot predict success, *then* there will be reason to accept the value of the alternative definitions. But few in the field believe that this has even begun to happen.)

Note that none of what I have written has anything to do with *why* some people are highly intelligent and others are not. Even one who would argue that intelligence is *entirely* a function of environmental factors could—and would have to—assent to all that is written above.

Which is not to say that intelligence is even moderately, much less entirely, a function of environmental factors (especially environmental factors affecting the individual after the age of two or so, when the plasticity of the brain is dramatically reduced).

The question of the causation of intelligence will be the test of intellectual integrity in the coming decades. That most social scientists *wish* that heredity were of little importance to intelligence speaks well of them. The bizarre lengths to which they will go to demonstrate that this is the case does not.

STEVEN GOLDBERG
Chairman
Department of Sociology
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ROBERT J. STERNBERG replies: In his letter to the editor, Steven Goldberg presents a diverse assortment of personal opinions on several issues regarding intelligence and my article on it. My reply will be in terms of the published scientific evidence on these issues.

1. *The relation of intelligence to creativity.* Typically, correlations between IQ and measured creativity are weakly positive ($r = 20\pm$). Evidence suggests that most people identified as highly creative have IQs above 120 and that after this level of IQ there just isn't much relation between the two constructs. It is simply not true that we are unable to distinguish between creative and analytical abilities, as I and others have shown in published research that Goldberg has perhaps not read (see, e.g., R. J. Sternberg and T. I. Lubart, *Defying the Crowd*, Free Press, 1995).

2. *The relation of IQ to various forms of success.* Conventional tests of intelligence and related abilities best predict each other; they also predict grades in school fairly well. Beyond that, their prediction is quite weak. Even Herrnstein and Murray, strong proponents of such tests, found that prediction to various measures of real-world success is at a level whereby the tests typically account for less than 10 percent of the variation across individuals. Our own work has shown that tests of *practical intelligence* predict real-world success as well as or better than do the conventional tests of academic intelligence. The Technical Report of the Graduate Record Examination is consistent with our own data in showing that the GRE predicts first-year grades in graduate school pretty well, but is sporadic and very weak in predicting success beyond such grades. One study reported in the technical report showed correlations of about .2 with citation counts for historians; another study found no relation between publication rates and GRE scores. Our own studies found that the GRE predicted first-year grades; beyond that, prediction was weak or nonexistent.

3. *The relation of IQ to people's conceptions of intelligence.* Here, as above, empirical data render personal opinions of Goldberg or anyone else moot. Our own published research (reported, for example, in R. J. Sternberg, *Beyond IQ*, Cambridge, 1985) has shown that IQ represents a part, but not the whole, of people's conceptions of intelligence in the U.S. For example, social competence is a part of people's conceptions of intelligence, but is not measured by IQ tests. Work by John Berry and many others has shown that the tests much more poorly represent conceptions of intelligence in cultures other than our own.

4. *Heritability of intelligence.* Virtually all published research shows both hereditary and environmental contributions to IQ. However, heritability varies across the abilities being assessed, the populations in whom they are assessed, and across the particular tests used to make the measurements.

In general, the progress of the field of intelligence will probably be enhanced when individuals in the field (a) cite all relevant research, rather than only that research that supports their own points of view, (b) base their arguments on scientific data rather than on personal or sociopolitical ideologies; and (c) recognize that the danger of measuring something without under-

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standing it is that we may be measuring the wrong thing, or only a part of the right one. Using correlation coefficients to justify the existing state of affairs can be hazardous, especially when the correlations are often a result of, rather than a cause of, this state of affairs: As long as we sort people by test scores, success will be correlated with test scores precisely because we sorted people by them! People who are not given opportunities cannot succeed in the opportunities not given them.

Indefatigable Alchemist

In his "Indefatigable Alchemist" (Summer 1996), an account of Richard Rorty's pragmatism, Tibor Machan repeats a confusion about the pragmatists' critique of "foundationalism" which greatly distorts their position. The confusion is this: the rejection of "foundationalism" does *not* mean that our claims to knowledge have no "basis" in a real world and it certainly does not mean that there is no real world to know. The argument about foundationalism concerns whether knowledge is an edifice resting on some fundamental certainties as a base. The question whether we know anything about a real world and whether such a world constrains our thought about it concerns the opposition between realism and anti-realism. The two issues, while not unconnected, are far from being the same. "Pragmatists," Machan writes, "have always found fault with the ancient desire to find foundations for our beliefs." And he continues by saying that pragmatism has an element in it which he describes as "a basic distrust of foundationalism, with its idea that our world view and our various answers to philosophical questions rest on a firm foundation either in some theological notion, . . . or sensory experience." The confusion is right there; Machan is supposing that to be opposed to "foundationalism" is the same as not wanting "foundations for our beliefs." This is not so as is shown by Peirce who offered the most compelling reasons for abandoning the foundationalist conception of knowledge at the same time that he set forth the conditions under which knowledge of the real world is actually attained.

Peirce had a great concern that a method be found whereby our thinking is determined by an external permanency, by something on which thought has no effect. He found this method in controlled inquiry, but he rejected the model for knowledge, epitomized by Descartes, according to which knowledge is an edifice built up on "foundations" which are taken as *absolute certainties* such as clear and distinct ideas, the first impressions of sense, axioms and the like. Peirce's contention was that the knowledge we possess does not have the shape of a deductive edifice built on initial certainties. In rejecting foundationalism, Peirce was rejecting this conception of knowledge; he was *not* claiming that knowledge has no "basis" in reality. Machan catches the point when he says that Peirce did not recommend abandoning realism, but it is wide of the mark to say that for Peirce reality is a sort of "collective postulate" arrived at by consulting some ideal community of scientists. On the contrary, Peirce insisted that the *actual* community of inquirers presupposes what he called the "independent reals" as the object of their quest; what they claim to know is of the nature of an opinion, but what the opinion is about—the real—is *not* itself an opinion. Peirce held that reality is insistent and that pervasive experience "forces itself" upon us; our thinking is under the constraint of what there is. His denial of foundationalism does not alter this realism one whit, which is the reason that the issue of foundationalism must not be conflated with that of realism/anti-realism. I should add that if Rorty's pragmatism were more informed by Peirce's thought, it would be less relativistic and nihilistic.

JOHN E. SMITH
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Yale University

The Death of Plato

In his article about Socrates, Plato, philosophy, and politics, "The Death of Plato," which appeared in the Summer 1996 SCHOLAR, James V. Schall demonstrates no awareness that there was any *difference* between Socrates and Plato, or between Plato's early works representing Socrates, like the *Apology*, and his later works presenting Platonic theories (Recollection, the Forms, etc.), like the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.

The kind of distortion this introduces is evident in several of Schall's statements about Socrates. First, he says, "Many of these same youths [attending Socrates' death] had annoyed their fathers, Socrates' accusers, by going home and playfully imitating Socrates. This semi-jesting imitation was why the fathers thought Socrates was undermining the city." This seriously trivializes the problem Socrates faced: for Schall himself is clearly aware of the career of the "youth" Alcibiades, who was "playfully imitating" Socrates by mutilating the Hermae (the protective statues of Hermes around the city), deserting his post with the army in Sicily to avoid

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indictment, treasonously going over to the Spartans, and wisely advising them how to win the war with Athens (a war that Athens had restarted at Alcibiades' own urging). This was clearly not a "semi-jesting" matter. It undoubtedly did contribute to "undermining the city," i.e., losing the war, and the citizens of Athens could hardly be blamed for at least wondering about Socrates' role in Alcibiades' education.

Second, Schall says, "This bothersomeness [i.e., the activities of the youths] is what brought Socrates, from his hiddenness in his private life, to their public attention." This is obviously false from the evidence of the *Apology* itself. A man who stands around by the "banker's [or "money changers'" in other translations] tables in the marketplace," as Socrates describes it himself, asking questions all day and drawing large, amused crowds is hardly engaged in any kind of "hiddenness" and needn't worry about whether he will come to public attention. When Socrates talks about avoiding public life, he simply means his refusal to participate in politics, not that he retreats from public notice. Indeed, Socrates says that if anyone claims to have heard anything from him privately that he did not say in public, "be assured that he is lying" (*Apology* 33B). This indeed is an important difference between Socrates and Plato. Socrates' "liking for people" (as he puts it in the *Euthyphro*) led him to ask his questions of the man in the street—young and old, rich and poor, citizen and stranger, as he says in the *Apology*. Plato retreats outside the walls of Athens to his school at the Academy and then decides, in the *Republic*, that philosophy is too dangerous to be taught to just anyone. No man-in-the-street questioning for Plato. One consequently wonders about the degree of Plato's own "liking for people."

Third, Schall says, "Socrates seldom talked to those who had already decided, who had already definitively revealed their souls as upholders of the polis, of the ways of life of wealth, pleasure, or power. Socrates could only talk with those who could still change their souls." This is also false, not just in terms of the evidence already cited, but in terms of the basic meaning of Socrates' investigation: to vindicate the Oracle, Socrates' job was to examine anyone who *claimed* to be wise. Hence the public and indiscriminate nature of Socrates' interlocutors and audience. It was Plato, not Socrates, who wanted to restrict himself to a selected few. The sign at the door of the Academy is supposed to have said, "Let no one enter here who has not studied geometry." Such a test would not just be contrary to the purpose of Socrates' mission from the god, but it would be totally irrelevant. Geometry, however salutary or interesting, is clearly not germane to the "human and political kind of excellence" (*Apology* 20B)—the issues of "the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad" (*Euthyphro* 7D)—that was the topic of Socrates' questions.

By lumping Socrates and Plato together into Plato's program for philosophy, James Schall therefore misses the point, the context, the purpose, and the attitude that accompanied Socrates' practice of philosophy. Perhaps Socrates is so hard to understand because no one in philosophy has ever again done what he did: which was simply to stop people on the street and in the marketplace and ask them what they were doing, and why. The "why" then leads into his questions about virtue, piety, justice, etc. Plato, with fine irony, in a sense really *agreed* with Socrates' accusers that this was a dangerous thing to do. He certainly didn't do it himself.

KELLEY L. ROSS
Instructor of Philosophy
Los Angeles Valley College

FATHER SCHALL replies: I am, for the record, aware that Plato is not Socrates and that Plato was first a young, then an old man. Three brief comments:

1) The imitation of Socrates by the potential philosophers was called "playful" because it did not yet bear the seriousness of Socrates' enterprise of examining one's life. I have always assumed that the city fathers were more worried about authentic philosophic vocations than about Alcibiades' disordered soul that Socrates himself strove unsuccessfully to reform. The charge of "corrupting" the youth in the city seems more serious when applied to Plato and his brothers than to Alcibiades, whom in fact Socrates did not corrupt. The fear of the city fathers about Socrates because of Alcibiades revealed their disorder, not Socrates'.

2) Clearly Socrates talks to many citizens in pursuit of his vocation. In a small city such as Athens such conversation could well draw a crowd, including the youth in search of amusement. I suppose this could be called "public." I have always taken Socrates' insistence that he was a private citizen and that he would have been killed sooner were he a public one to be the guiding principle here about private and public.

3) Socrates pictured himself as a gadfly who, by following the Oracle, did the city good by having the citizens examine themselves about how they lived. Professor Ross praises Socrates for doing this examination in a way that not even Plato would imitate. I have indeed read this experience in the fight of the young men of *The Republic*. That is to say, I have understood the phrase "talked to" to mean those who were willing seriously to change their lives. My impression of the

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street encounters in Athens, and in the souls of most of the potential philosophers looking on, was that Socrates found very few willing to do anything about the virtues. The enjoyment of the youth, themselves not yet, if ever, virtuous, was in seeing their elders, who just wanted to keep the city as it was, embarrassed and unable to justify their lives. As I see it, for the city fathers the danger to Athens did not come from Alcibiades but from those youth, like Plato indeed, who did listen to and imitate Socrates in their own way, in the way of a more earnest "talking to" that would reorient their souls to virtue. Socrates did not manage to change the souls of many of those he questioned. This is why, in *The Apology*, he would finally turn to the citizen majority who condemned him and warn them that they would forever be remembered as those who killed the philosopher. In the end, Socrates did only "talk to" a few, a fact that may reveal something about human nature itself. Plato understood this about Socrates.

Handlin and Schall

There is a remarkable (and probably unplanned) tension between Oscar Handlin's "The Unmarked Way" and James V. Schall's "The Death of Plato," which appeared in the Summer 1996 issue. After Professor Handlin remarks of life, "To what end? That question, unanswered, breeds suppressed discontent among all who plod on alone," Father Schall resounds with Plato's "God is the measure of all things." And, "We are to spend our days 'singing, dancing and sacrificing' because this is the only response we can make to the good *that is*." Schall's subject, Eric Voegelin, believed that Plato was a forerunner of Christianity and one can certainly see comparisons with this grand optimism in God that goes with a faith in Jesus Christ.

While such ironies can be thought-provoking, one wishes eventually that we were more sure of ourselves in our search for the truth. After Handlin starts out so well in his telling analysis of our drift, he then lapses into doubt. My vote is for Schall's (and Plato's and Voegelin's) ringing faith in transcendent truth. After all, in our continuing struggle, there is no other answer.

W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, California

The Unmarked Way

The "Unmarked Way" by Oscar Handlin certainly caused me to ponder his conclusions with appreciation. As a clergyman, I was intrigued by this sentence: "Increasingly, well-bred people frowned upon intolerance and particularly upon that form which required the individual to subscribe to a defined article of faith: an acquiescent temper blurred differences."

I aqree that there are many whose version of tolerance promotes theological mush. However, I hold that there are even more whose theological/doctrinal convictions are not weakened by their non-patronizing tolerance of other convictions.

Also, there are many non-significant differences which deserve to be blurred.

Walter D. Wagoner
Greenwich, Connecticut

Auden and Powell

People's assessment of the novels of Anthony Powell may differ—on a scale from one to ten, where Proust is a ten, I personally give him a four—but it would be hard to disagree about the crass stupidity of the remark he is quoted as having made—and which was quoted once again in John S. Monagan's "A Visit with Anthony Powell" (Summer 1996)—upon hearing of the death of Auden. "I'm *delighted* that *shit* is gone; scuttling off to America in 1939 with his boy friend." One of the reasons why Powell's novels are basically mediocre is that he has no sympathetic understanding of the "other." Proust, after all, was one of the most compelling writers who ever lived about the experience of heterosexual love, of which he had no experience.

Much has been written about Auden's emigration to the United States from Britain. What I have not seen mentioned is the fact that his homosexual life style was legally categorized as "Gross Indecency" under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. Auden could have been arrested at any time. Take the case of the computer scientist and mathematician Alan Turing. During the war he was one of the people who helped to crack the German "enigma" code, which saved tens of thousands of British and Allied soldiers' lives—perhaps that of Powell. In 1952 he was convicted under this act and given the choice of going to prison or spending a year taking estrogen as a form of "cure." He chose the latter which caused him to develop breasts. He committed suicide in 1954 by eating a poisoned apple. What did Mr. Powell say when he learned about this, "It served the bugger right?"

Jeremy Bernstein
Aspen, Colorado

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